

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: EMANCIPATION FROM DOUBLETHINK?  
POST- SOVIET POLITICAL PARTIES  
AND LEADERSHIP

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This study examines the phenomenon of doublethink as a core feature of the “mental software” that continues to define the character of post-Soviet societies. It is revealed in patterns of prevarication and equivocation that characterize the thinking and behavior of both the elites and the masses. Doublethink is also manifested in incongruous values and duplicitous rules that prevail in society. It accounts for the perpetuation of simulative and fake institutions of “façade democracy.” Political parties in post-Soviet Ukraine are analyzed as a major example of simulative and imitative institutions. Here, traditional ideology-based party taxonomies prove misleading. Political parties are quasi-virtual entities with the character of “post-Orwellian political machines”: they operate in a topsy-turvy world of imitated supply and deluded demand. The study employs three levels of analysis: macro (surveys data and “Tocquevillean” observations); meso (biographical data and political discourse analysis); and micro (in-depth interviews).

EMANCIPATION FROM DOUBLETHINK?  
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## INTRODUCTION

The starting point of this research project is an intellectual inquiry into the reasons for the failure of the “transition paradigm” in post-Soviet polities. The meanings of the ambiguous post-Soviet “transition” and the factors that caused this ambiguity present a puzzle that is not fully resolved in political science literature, as shown by the review presented in Chapter 1. Further, this study addresses what is deemed to be the “missing link” of the “transition paradigm” – namely, the problem of metanoia, or the mental change. For more than two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, “Soviet legacies” are still a significant factor in post-Soviet politics and societies. Although that factor is frequently mentioned, it is rarely specified. This work attempts to define the mental legacies of the Soviet past – conspicuously called “Soviet mental software” – and examine how they influence the formation and functioning of new political institutions.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Soviet civilization was a project that imitated modernity. Therefore, the challenges of post-Soviet transition are discussed here as challenges of realignment with modernity. The deficient modernity of Soviet communism perpetuated the historical Russian trait of “potemkinism.” It produced complex patterns of prevaricative and equivocative thinking and behavior. Their essence was insightfully captured by George Orwell in his conceptual frame of “doublethink.”

Doublethink was the key element of the “Soviet mental software” -- a product of a number of factors that played together in the formation of the “New

Soviet Man,” as argued in Chapter 3. By the same token, the trait of doublethink became a major cultural legacy of the post-Soviet societies. It accounts for confused and ambiguous orientations, attitudes, and political behavior of both the elites and the masses.

While doublethink is shown to be a generic feature inherent to all post-Soviet societies, this study discusses post-Soviet Ukraine as a prime example and a showcase of that phenomenon – the society where the ambiguity of ideological values overlaps with the duality of collective identity and memory: “creole” Russophile and “post-colonial” anti-Russian. The impact of those dual orientations is briefly discussed in Chapters 1 and 4.

The overall argument presented in Part One of this work is that doublethink – the trait of post-Soviet collective mind – breeds not only ambiguous and confused orientations, but also deluded political behavior, as well as virtuality and fakeness in political institutions.

As a feature of mass consciousness, doublethink is manifested in political practices and thus inhibits the development of modern political institutions. Part Two of this work examines one specific example of such negative impact: the stalled development of political parties in post-communist Ukraine. The central question asked here is as follows: is the legacy of doublethink compatible with democratic consolidation? This study also addresses a related normative question: is there a cure for doublethink, and where can it come from?

The primary method of this study is interpretive research focused on analysis of human self-reflection and meaning-making.<sup>1</sup> The body of data embraced by the study includes media news, commentary, interviews, published sociological surveys, as well as field observations and interviews performed by the author over a number of years.

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<sup>1</sup> Primary methodological guidance was taken from: Peregrin Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow. *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes*. Routledge, 2011.

**PART ONE.**

**THE CHALLENGE OF POST-SOVIET  
REALIGNMENT WITH MODERNITY**



## **CHAPTER 1. POST-SOVIET EXPERIENCE: *EN ROUTE FROM COMMUNISM “TO ELSEWHERE”***

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### **1.1. Discouraged Theories of Post-Soviet Transitions**

Grand theories of political science have not fared well in the world of post-Soviet politics. In the opinion of some leading scholars, many comparativists have chosen to “simply ignore the post-Soviet cases altogether as a way to protect the validity of their findings derived from other regional studies.”<sup>2</sup>

Reality disproved the “triumphalist” notion that the end of the USSR was synonymous with a victory of the liberal democratic order. Instead of an orderly and “paradigm-consistent” transition to democracy, we observe “a confused process with no clear direction.”<sup>3</sup>

The early post-communist discourse of “transitology” and “consolidology” – subsequently characterized as ‘imperial and messianic’<sup>4</sup>, as well as ‘intellectually neocolonialist’<sup>5</sup> – was based on a set of unstated assumptions. The most erroneous among them, as it transpired later, was the idea that post-communist transitions were

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<sup>2</sup> *After the Collapse of Communism: Comparative Lessons of Transition*. Michael McFaul and Katheyn Stoner Weiss (eds.), 2004, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Charles H. Fairbanks, Jr. *Revolutions Reconsidered*. *Journal of Democracy* 18.1 (2007) 42-57, p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> Michael McFaul and Katheyn Stoner Weiss *The Evolving Social Science of Postcommunism*. *After the Collapse of Communism...*, p 2.

<sup>5</sup> Rudolph Tökés *"Transitology": Global Dreams and Post-Communist Realities*, 2000.

consensual efforts of respective societies towards instauration of liberal democracy,<sup>6</sup> and that neo-liberal reformers played a central role in making that change happen.<sup>7</sup>

Such triumphalist and euphoric notions were countered by early voices cautioning that in many post-communist transitions, a goal is only “something that *pretends* to be a democracy”.<sup>8</sup> From a “non-euphoric” view, transition was seen as a difficult road “between liberation and freedom,”<sup>9</sup> where democratic elections could bring to power illiberal demagogues and populists that would become a headache for Western democracy promoters.<sup>10</sup> Years later, Fareed Zakaria elaborated this concern by highlighting a spreading phenomenon of “illiberal democracy”: the emergence of democratically elected regimes that disregard the rule of law and basic liberties.<sup>11</sup> Thomas Carothers followed with a comprehensive criticism of transitology

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<sup>6</sup> The flaws of such “hidden ideological bias” are addressed in detail by Rudolph Tökés (ibid., pp. 2-3).

<sup>7</sup> Venelin Ganey indicates how mistaken that assumption is by emphasizing that “during most of the 1990s, the role of pro-market politicians and neoliberal ideas was minimal”. In: Venelin Ganey. *Preying on the State*. Cornell Univ. Press, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Ghia Nodia. How Different Are Post-Communist Transitions? *Journal of Democracy* 7(4), 1996, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> Vladimir Tismaneanu. Between Liberation and Freedom. *Uprooting Leninism, Cultivating Liberty*. V. Tismaneanu and P. Clawson (eds.). University Press of America, 1992.

<sup>10</sup> At the peak of post-communist ‘triumphalism’, and years before the NATO military operation in Yugoslavia, Vladimir Tismaneanu was pointing out: “What is Washington to do with Slobodan Milosevic? On the one hand, he is an extremely dangerous nationalist and neo-communist; on the other hand, he was unquestionably the electoral choice of the Serbian people. This problem of dealing with [...] demagogic democrats bodes to be as thorny in the postcommunist era as the problem of “friendly tyrants” was during the cold war” (ibid., pp. 41-42). Since then, there has been a long list of such ‘thorny’ post-Soviet leaders, including Lukashenka, Kuchma, and Putin, to name a few.

<sup>11</sup> Fareed Zakaria – Rise of Illiberal Democracy *Foreign Affairs*, Nov. 1997.

assumptions in his seminal article<sup>12</sup> that came to be seen as “the intellectual epitaph of the transition paradigm”.<sup>13</sup>

A separate line of transitology criticism concerned the falseness of analogies between post-communist transitions and the fall of nationalist dictatorships in South European and Latin American countries (often referred to as “the second wave of global democratization”). Critics argued that ‘second wave’ fundamentally differed from post-communist transitions both in the character of the old order and the tasks of democratization. In ‘second wave’ cases, key government institutions were in place, as well as a system of private ownership, banking and commerce; there were pluralist groups within the elites and politically aware public. Therefore, democratization could proceed by means of incremental law making and incremental social change. Post-communist transitions required not only a new architecture of state institutions, but also creating a market economy ‘from scratch’ of state-owned assets and shadow private sector. They also required a complete reinvention of civil society in place of atomized citizenry.<sup>14</sup>

Although the expectations reflected in the transition paradigm have generally come true in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, they essentially failed in the “core” Soviet republics. It is interesting to note, for instance, how Zbigniew Brezinski’s predictions accurately materialized for those former communist

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas Carothers. The End of Transition Paradigm *JoD* 13:1 (2002).

<sup>13</sup> Fairbanks 2007, *ibid.*.

<sup>14</sup> Tokes, *ibid.*

states that gained accession to NATO and EU, but failed for such countries as Russia or Ukraine whose prospects looked rather hopeful back in 1993.<sup>15</sup>

Scholars' focus on "change" in the post-Soviet space may have been misplaced. Long after the fall of the communist rule, there is a 'most striking' discovery that post-Soviet societies are 'a surprising mix of change and continuity.'<sup>16</sup> Attentive observers point out that today's Russia is still defined by its Soviet legacies: "while the ideology has gone, the mechanism for sustaining political power remains."<sup>17</sup> That 'mechanism' is described as the manner of functioning of the country's key institutions – from the presidential administration and the court system to television and education, all based on "the Soviet mental software" – something that "has proved much more durable than the ideology itself."<sup>18</sup> Reflecting on that discouraging continuity, a major Russian journalist bitterly remarks: "We still have a Soviet facial expression and Soviet notions about the world [...] We are still living in a Soviet warehouse."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski. The Great Transformation. *The National Interest*, Fall 1993, pp. 3-13.

At that time, Brzezinski predicted democratic consolidation and accession to NATO and EU for "successfully" transforming countries within 5-15 years, and he estimated success chances of Russia, Ukraine, or Kyrgyzstan higher than those of Romania or Macedonia.

<sup>16</sup> McFaul and Stoner-Weiss. The Evolving Social Science of Postcommunism. *After the Collapse of Communism: Comparative Lessons of Transition*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> The Long Life of Homo Sovieticus. *The Economist*, December 10, 2011, p. 27.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Semion Novoprudsky. Soviet Warehouse. *Gazeta.Ru*, August 19, 2011. (In Russian).

There is a remarkable lack of consensus in political science literature as to defining post-Soviet political regimes. Whereas the term “hybrid” is now broadly accepted, its analytical value is limited because of its implicitly broad meaning. Efforts to define more specific subtypes of hybrid regimes resulted in a wave of new terms known as ‘democracy with adjectives’<sup>20</sup>, later followed by a similar wave of ‘authoritarianism with adjectives.’<sup>21</sup> Both waves admittedly added to the conceptual confusion in regard to understanding post-communist hybrid regimes.<sup>22</sup>

Many scholars now admit that attention to formal institutions – e.g. nuances of constitutional design -- does not reveal important features of hybrid post-Soviet regimes. Levitsky and Way convincingly argue that hybrid regimes are characterized by “the centrality of informal institutions.”<sup>23</sup> A good illustration to this argument was offered by Ukraine’s political leader Yulia Tymoshenko when she remarked:

“The presidential forms of government in Ukraine and the US bear the same name, but they differ like a crude forgery differs from a genuine masterpiece. By the same token, if we compare the US presidential form of government with the parliamentary models in Germany or

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transformation. Arguably, the most meaningful outcome of the two decades of post-Soviet development is the fact that it continues to be defined as “post-Soviet.”

<sup>20</sup> Collier and Levitsky 1997.

<sup>21</sup> Levitsky and Way discuss how important shades of meaning distinguish ‘competitive authoritarianism’ from ‘electoral authoritarianism’, ‘semi-authoritarianism’, ‘democratic authoritarianism’ and other related terms. In: Stephen Levitsky and Lucan Way. *Competitive Authoritarianism*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010, pp. 5-16.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.27

Britain, we will find a lot more in common than there is in the first instance.”<sup>24</sup>

Levitsky and Way characterize the majority of post-Soviet political regimes as competitive authoritarian – where electoral competition is real, but unfairly skewed by authoritarian practices of the government. They analyze post-Soviet regimes as fundamentally similar to hybrid regimes of the third world. This analysis is focused on two features of hybrid regimes: (a) impact of international environment (expressed in their proposed variables of “linkage” and “leverage”); (b) “organizational power of incumbents.”<sup>25</sup>

From an inside perspective, post-Soviet ‘competitive authoritarian’ regimes are more often described as “imitation democracies” where formal democratic features are a decorative façade, while practical power is in the hands of a narrow oligarchy.<sup>26</sup> Such understanding is consistent with Larry Diamond’s view that “all hybrid regimes in the world today are deliberately *pseudodemocratic*” because “formally democratic political institutions mask the reality of authoritarian domination.”<sup>27</sup> Imitation democracies in countries like Russia, Ukraine or Azerbaijan are deemed to differ from outright dictatorships by the presence of informal checks

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<sup>24</sup> Interview to *Zerkalo Nedeli*, April 19, 2012. (In Russian).

<sup>25</sup> L&W, *ibid.*, pp. 37-86.

<sup>26</sup> Yaroslav Shimov. “Shards of Broken Pieces. Democratization Wave Crashed on the Borders of the Former Soviet Union”. *Gazeta.Ru*, August 18, 2011. (In Russian).

<sup>27</sup> Larry Diamond. Thinking About Hybrid Regimes. *JoD*, 13.2 (2002), p. 24.

and balances within the oligarchic “elites”, wherefore a degree of pluralism and political competition is maintained.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, a dichotomous frame of democracy vs. authoritarianism continues to dominate in scholarly interpretations of post-Soviet political regimes. Even though hybrid regimes demonstrate no clear transition of any kind – as emphasized by Thomas Carothers – the dichotomous frame is argued to be indispensable because those regimes “can only be understood in terms of how near or how far they are from democracy.”<sup>29</sup>

From a contrary view, such dichotomous interpretations lead to conceptual stretching and erroneous search for “good” and “bad” players in post-Soviet politics,<sup>30</sup> but this does not help to understand the true nature of political struggle, nor the trends of regime change in post-Soviet societies.<sup>31</sup>

Another approach that attempts to bring analysis of hybrid regimes beyond formal institutions is known as “neopatrimonial interpretation.”<sup>32</sup> It focuses on the character of power relations within the elites (rational-legal vs. clientelistic-

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<sup>28</sup> Shimov, *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Nodia. *The Democratic Path*, JoD, 13.3 (2002), p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> As illustrated by this comment from Charles H. Fairbanks, Jr: “A Russian friend remarked that reading the American press on Russia was like reading the old *Pravda*: certain nouns never appeared without a certain adjective. He was right. We rarely saw the names Yeltsin, Gaidar, or Chubais without the Homeric epithet “democratic reformer”, or the name Zyuganov without the word “hardliner”. This describes journalism and foreign policy, but we scholars did not correct it. We omitted all the complexities, shadings, and paradoxes; our presentation of the Russian struggle was uncomfortably close to the cliché “all black and white.” JoD, 10.2 (1999), p. 52.

<sup>31</sup> Fisun, Oleksandr. Towards Rethinking Post-Soviet Politics: a neopatrimonial interpretation. *Politicheskaia Kontseptologia*, No. 4, 2010 (in Russian).

<sup>32</sup> E.g. Fisun 2007; van Zon 2005 (Uk), van Zon 2009 (?) =Rus.

neopatrimonial). From this perspective, post-Soviet states are compared to an iceberg in which modern political institutions and constitutional rules comprise the visible part, while the bigger and more important underwater segment is made up by the “patrimonial systems of domination.”<sup>33</sup>

Some scholars use the distinction between the two models of power relations to explain the divergence of transition paths between East Central Europe and the post-Soviet space. For instance, Ivan Szelenyi speaks about the two families of post-communist societies – “neoliberal” and “neo-patrimonial.”<sup>34</sup> In a similar way, Oleksandr Fisun contrasts the two types of post-communist elites’ pacts: in East Central Europe, those pacts were addressing a democratization agenda, whereas in the post-Soviet space, their agenda was “cartel agreements on state capture.” According to Fisun, the peculiar path of post-Soviet states was caused by their ‘inverse developmental sequence’ – when democratization had not been preceded by the development of a modern nation-state.

From a conventional view, the starting point of post-communist transition was an omnipotent Leviathan state that needed to be modernized by adopting the concept of limited government. In reality, however, the communist Leviathan had been a party-state conglomerate. When the separation of party and state took place at the starting point of all transitions, the resulting post-communist state revealed syndromes of weakness -- that appeared conceptually surprising. In

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<sup>33</sup> Fisun 2003, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Ivan Szelenyi. “Poverty under post-communist capitalism - the effects of class and ethnicity in a cross-national comparison.” Paper presented at the conference “Unity and Diversity”, Bruges, 2001. For Szelenyi, the decisive indicator of each variation was the chosen mode of state assets privatization (auctions vs. vouchers).



countries where the former ruling party bosses maintained their hegemonic position as the informal “party of power”, the outcome was described as “preying on the state.” In that environment, “the most important form of entrepreneurship was the large-scale effort by state officials to re-deploy and appropriate resources hoarded into the immense public sphere previously guarded by the party/state.”<sup>35</sup> Moreover, such predatory elites were interested in perpetuating the weakness of state institutions because that was a necessary condition for their successful extraction of resources from the state. Thus, declared goals of strengthening the state would come in contradiction with bureaucrats’ shadow interests, informal rules and practices (or, more aptly put, there was an incongruous duality of every government official’s “impersonal bureaucratic role and a personal profitmaking role”<sup>36</sup>). Duplicity would be the order of the day in that predatory behavior.

There is recognition that the weakness of post-communist -- particularly post-Soviet -- states is a problem deserving special attention in political theory, because all previous transitions from authoritarian rule had never weakened the state. Therefore, “eminent Western experts on democratic transition did not anticipate the emergence of weak states after communism”.<sup>37</sup> In a “fumbling attempt to find some label” for post-Soviet state weakness, many commentators -- especially domestic -- resort to analogies with feudal states in medieval Europe. Clientelistic relations within the post-Soviet “party of power” resemble the feudal tenure of fiefdoms: “in the

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<sup>35</sup> Ganev,, p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Charles F. Fairbanks. Feudaization of the State JoD,10.2 (1999), p. 49.

<sup>37</sup> Charles F. Fairbanks, Jr. The Feudal Analogy, JoD 11.3 (2000), p. 35.

regime inherited by Putin, as in West European feudalism, rulers pay for the performance of a public duty by transferring a resource to be exploited. This practice, the core mechanism of feudalism, blurs the distinction between public and private, and squanders the power of the state.”<sup>38</sup> The feudal analogy becomes even more meaningful for post-Soviet states if we take into account that earlier it was also applied to characterizing the late phase of the Soviet system.<sup>39</sup>

And so, the post-Soviet phenomenon is still waiting for “a shared definition of what we have witnessed in the region.”<sup>40</sup> Consensus is lacking about the meanings of the events of 1991, about the nature of the core post-Soviet political systems, and about the character of their transformation. Arguably, the most meaningful outcome of the two decades of post-Soviet development is the fact that it continues to be defined as “post-Soviet.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Fairbanks *ibid.* p. 36.

<sup>39</sup> E.g. Charles King points out that ‘was overlooked’..... Post-postcommunism... *World Politics*, 53.1. (2000), p. 158-159. Mikhail Voslensky’s *Nomenklatura* (1991) provides a detailed description of late Soviet system via the feudalism frame.

<sup>40</sup> McFaul and Stoner-Weiss (*ibid.*), p. 7. This point remains valid two decades after the Soviet collapse: a conference panel dedicated to that anniversary featured five presentations with five different interpretative frames (as noted by Timothy Colton in his remarks at George Washington University on December 8, 2011).

<sup>41</sup> Some scholars maintain that while countries of CEE have already moved beyond the phase of post-communism, former Soviet states continue to remain in that analytical category, and it will be a challenge for political science to explain when “post-Soviet post-communism” is going to come to an end and how that “threshold” should be established (e.g. Timothy Colton, *ibid.*).

## **1.2. Frustrations of Departure from Soviet Civilization**

The ‘paradigmatic’ perspective considered post-communist transformation as a reform process with three main components: political (establishment of basic freedoms, elections, parties), economic (privatization and marketization), and regulatory (developing a new structure of governance).<sup>42</sup>

An important missing element in this paradigm was a reform of earlier mentioned “mental software”, i.e. the frames of collective mind, or the collective consciousness – beliefs and attitudes embedded in a social order. Ghia Nodia proposed to name this transformational task with Carl Jung’s term “metanoia” (change of thinking). Nodia reasoned that post-communist transformation should be seen as the reversal of the communist revolution, whose project was the cultivation of ‘the new socialist man.’ Therefore, a challenge of post-communism would be “to cure post-communist man of the traumatic communist experience.”<sup>43</sup>

The Soviet system was arguably “the most comprehensive form of closed society ever invented by man.”<sup>44</sup> In East Central Europe, the communist project was not as lengthy as in the Soviet Union, especially – and very importantly – in its totalitarian phase. It became only a limited replication of the comprehensive construct known as “the Soviet civilization” whose fundamental features were shaped

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<sup>42</sup> Brzezinski, *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Ghia Nodia, *How Different Are Postcommunist Transitions?* JoD, 7.4 (1996).

<sup>44</sup> George Soros. *Who Lost Russia?* *The New York Review of Books*, April 13, 2000.

during Stalin's rule.<sup>45</sup> Yet, the collapse of communist regimes in East Central Europe was followed by a "post-partum depression from communism" with a "growing chasm between premodern anxieties and postmodern expectations."<sup>46</sup> Post-communist transition in those countries was accompanied by spiritual reactions that included nostalgia, "moral disarray of the times of historical fracture," and also "malaise, widespread exasperation, fatigue, and a general sense of exhaustion."<sup>47</sup>

Post-Soviet societies revealed an even stronger presence of such pathologies. They were deemed to be engaged in "self-diagnosis of psychiatric insanity"<sup>48</sup> as political leaders, journalists and even scholars would commonly resort to psychiatric terms in political discourse. Michail Gorbachev was one of the first to speak about post-communist "political schizophrenia."<sup>49</sup> Others have spoken of a "virus of madness, social and spiritual masochism",<sup>50</sup> "delirium and ecstatic idiocy"<sup>51</sup>, "mass insanity and psychosis",<sup>52</sup> etc.

As argued by prominent post-Soviet sociologists,

"The issue in question is the existence in society of a specific form of pathology which is entirely different both from mental disease as a subject of psychiatry and

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<sup>45</sup> E.g. Stephen Kotkin. *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*. Siniavsky. *The Soviet Civilization*.

<sup>46</sup> Vladimir Tismaneanu. *Reinventing Politics*, p. 294.

<sup>47</sup> Vladimir Tismaneanu. *Fantasies of Salvation*, p. 14.

<sup>48</sup> Holovaha and Panina, 1994, p. 7.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 8. The phrase "post-Soviet schizophrenia" has been widely used since then. As a concept, it was elaborated in detail in the writings of Mykola Riabchuk (Two Ukraines; .....).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p.7; quoted from an article by Aleksandr Yakovlev.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., quoted from a TV address by Russia's Vice-President Rutskoi.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., quoted from an interview by Russian philosopher Aleksandr Tsipko.

deviation from social norms of behavior as a traditional subject of sociology and political science. This form of pathology has been defined as *social insanity*. It is [...] a mass phenomenon associated with the destruction of a system of values and norms that regulate social behavior.”<sup>53</sup>

From this perspective, psychiatric terminology is of limited help in political analysis – it only provides allegoric labels that are inaccurate and misleading.

Holovakha and Panina proposed to distinguish between general social pathologies, or sociopathies (which are found in different ‘times of historic fracture,’ or disruptive cultural change) and those specific to post-totalitarian environment.

One kind of general sociopathy that is notably manifested in post-communist societies is *anomie*,<sup>54</sup> or ‘normlessness’ and social disharmony, (as opposed to *eunomia* -- a harmony of law and order). Anomie is known to facilitate social disintegration, demoralization, uncertainty of orientations and attitudes, social tension and conflicts.<sup>55</sup> In post-totalitarian societies, it is accompanied by perceived lack of social demand for one’s expertise and capacity, which translates into increased anxiety.<sup>56</sup> Another related manifestation of general sociopathy is a growth of xenophobic sentiments, ethnic and religious intolerance,<sup>57</sup> of “vindictive mythologies and scapegoating fantasies.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Yevhen Holovakha, 1995, p. 233.

<sup>54</sup> The concept was elaborated by Émile Durkheim in his book *Suicide* (1897).

<sup>55</sup> Holovakha and Panina, 1991, p. 89.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p. 96-103.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105-118.

<sup>58</sup> Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation...*, pp. 65-110.

Robert Merton discussed anomie as discontinuity between socially desired goals and socially acceptable means for reaching them.<sup>59</sup> Post-communist societies are abundant with situations when social groups are trying to achieve new goals by old means (e.g. the so called “market bolshevism”) or old goals by new means (e.g. communists appealing to democratic rules in order to legalize their party).<sup>60</sup>

Holovakha and Panina have argued that previously developed theories of social change cannot fully explain the sociopathies of post-communist societies. Neither the Industrial Revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, nor democratic transitions after World War II inflicted such an overwhelming change in people’s lives -- that would encompass abrupt changes in politics, ideology, social structure, and economic conditions of everyday living. They observed that

“The unpredictability of the social situation and the uncertainty of norms and values shape a mode of living characterized by dramatic contradiction between actions and feelings, when one’s own quite rational actions of adaptation to the new conditions of life are emotionally rejected, thus causing continuous deterioration of social health.”<sup>61</sup>

Those authors identified several sociopathic features specific to post-Soviet societies, which can be summarized as follows<sup>62</sup>.

Post-totalitarian ambivalence: mutually incompatible ideas and values coexist in collective mind without internal conflict, unified in one mode of conscience

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<sup>59</sup> Robert Merton. Social Structure and Anomie. *American Sociological Review* 3 (5): 672–682.

<sup>60</sup> Holovakha, *ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>61</sup> Holovakha and Panina, 1991, p. 120.

<sup>62</sup> Based on Holovakha and Panina, 1991; Holovakha 1995.

and emotional attitudes to social reality. It is linked to inability for critical thinking and a habit to thoughtless conformism. One of its forms is “mosaic conscience” where old pieces get easily replaced by their opposites.

Acquired social helplessness, or paternalistic mindset: a frame of thinking that would shift responsibility for public matters and even for one’s own fate to an external agency, such as domestic government, international donors, etc. Post-Soviet societies maintained a “system of social relations” that continued to reproduce the phenomenon of acquired social helplessness after the fall of the Soviet state.

Sociopathic communicative culture: it emphasizes confrontation and search for “enemies,” but lacks interest in understanding other people’s views and search for consensus and compromise. This feature is a legacy of the totalitarian cult of “struggle” and the tradition of top-down communication codified in the so called “principle of democratic centralism.”

Normative, or standard reactions to sociopathic anomie after communism are the ‘traditionalist’ and ‘authoritarian’ temptations: one is based on the sense of nostalgia for “good old times”, and the other is driven by desire for a strong-arm leader to restore “justice and order”<sup>63</sup> (or “waiting for Peron”<sup>64</sup>).

However, sociologists have also observed a bigger than expected ‘non-standard’ reaction to anomie in later post-Soviet years: growth of social cynicism, distrust, and rejection of ‘old’ moral standards. Their findings revealed the formation of a post-Soviet “immoral majority” -- when the majority of the nation

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<sup>63</sup> Holovakha and Panina, 2008.

<sup>64</sup> Vladimir Tismaneanu, *ibid.*, pp. 49-54.

appeared to think that honest behavior and responsiveness to others were qualities of “losers”, whereas bribes and fraud were more important for success than professional merit.<sup>65</sup>

To conclude, the sociopathic factor is a component of the “mental software” of post-Soviet societies. A product of “historical and cultural experiences, existential orientations, collective unspoken political volitions, and resolve of rallying crowds,” this mental software cannot be reduced to “clear qualities of order, norm, and rationality.”<sup>66</sup> On the contrary, it conspicuously includes “new delusions, political day-dreaming, primitive slogans, and notions that bear no real sense.” The latter, according to a prominent philosopher, “serve the post-communist individual as substitutes for stable forms of life and belief systems” and turn into “countless simulacra” that largely shape the political discourse of post-Soviet societies.<sup>67</sup>

### **1.3. Western Capitalism and Democracy Not Fitting for Post-Soviet Societies?**

One reason for deeply traumatic perceptions of the post-communist experience in the former Soviet space was a sense of economic loss. Economic hardships of transition in former Soviet countries were more profound, painful, and

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<sup>65</sup> Holovakha 2003.

<sup>66</sup> Bystrytsky, 1995, p. 30.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p. 32.



lengthy than in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>68</sup> Some have argued that “the Soviet society was not ready for capitalism,” that it lacked “the cultural baggage required by free market capitalism,”<sup>69</sup> and therefore the market economy became “a worse enemy for the Russian people than even the Communists said it would be.”<sup>70</sup>

The blame for a failure of post-Soviet reforms, according to a widely spread belief, lies on orthodox recipes of Western capitalism wrongly applied. As eloquently stated by Stephen Cohen,

“Mainstays of what was known as the “Washington Consensus” [...] professed to know the cure for [Russia’s ailments], gave regular assurances about the ongoing treatment, and predicted a full recovery. In reality, their prescriptions, reports, and prognoses were fundamentally wrong.”<sup>71</sup>

Contrary to positive expectations, post-Soviet reforms produced a system known as “bandit capitalism”<sup>72</sup> or “capitalism for the few.”<sup>73</sup> Academically, it is defined as “oligarchic capitalism” – a system in which “government policies are designed predominantly or exclusively to promote the interests of a very narrow (and very wealthy) portion of the population.”<sup>74</sup> In that system, government is not focused on the country’s development and economic growth but rather on

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<sup>68</sup> A detailed comparative analysis of the economic outcomes of reforms in CEE vs FSU is offered by Oleh Havrylyshyn 2006.

<sup>69</sup> BBC debate materials, 29 June 2010, at [www.intelligencesquated.com](http://www.intelligencesquated.com)

<sup>70</sup> Joseph Stiglitz. Who Lost Russia? (Chapter 5 in his *Globalization and its Discontents* 2002).

<sup>71</sup> Stephen Cohen. *Crusade that Failed*. P. 5.

<sup>72</sup> Peter Reddaway and Dmitri Glinski. *The Tragedy of Russia’s Reforms: Market Bolshevism Against Democracy*. USIP Press, 2001.

<sup>73</sup> Havrylyshyn 2006 book title.

<sup>74</sup> Baumol et al (book title) p. 71.

“maintaining and enhancing the economic position of the oligarchic few (including government leaders themselves) who own most of the country’s resources.”<sup>75</sup>

Oligarchs are engaged in predatory “state capture” and rent-seeking<sup>76</sup>.

Theorists of post-communist “capitalism building” emphasize that the oligarchic model of capitalism emerged as the result of insufficient (delayed, partial, unfinished) reform that opened extraordinary rent-seeking opportunities.<sup>77</sup> Such opportunities are deemed to be temporary and reducing towards the end of the transition period.<sup>78</sup> From that perspective, post-communist oligarchs are viewed as similar to “robber barons” of the Gilded Age in the U.S., who “rationally responded to a peculiar set of economic, legal, and political conditions” as they built their industrial empires.<sup>79</sup> According to this argument, oligarchs will inevitably ‘get civilized’: they will seek to secure their property rights and thus favor the development of stable institutions and laws. A legal system will evolve that can discipline the oligarchs.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* The authors discuss oligarchic capitalism as the worst variation of “bad capitalism” and find it prevalent, besides the former Soviet Union, also in Latin America, in Arabic Middle East, and in much of Africa.

<sup>76</sup> Havrylyshyn, *ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Joel Hellman. *Winners Take All: The Politics of Partial Reform in Postcommunist Transitions.* *World Politics*, 50 (1998), pp. 202-234. Anders Aslund and gearoges de Menil (eds). *Economic Reform in Ukraine: The Unfinished Agenda.* Armonk, New York: M.E.Sharpe, 2000.

<sup>78</sup> Anders Aslund. *Why Has Ukraine Failed to Achieve Economic Growth?* *Economic Reform in Ukraine: The Unfinished Agenda*, pp. 255-277.

<sup>79</sup> Aslund, *Comparative Oligarchy: Russia, Ukraine, and the United States.* Center for Social and Economic Research Paper #295, Warsaw 2005, p. 6.

<sup>80</sup> Aslund, *ibid.*, p. 15.

On the other hand, the development of post-Soviet rentier oligarchs is also likened to the historic transition of Early Middle Ages in Europe when “roving bandits” engaged in looting eventually became “stationary bandits” (princes, kings, governments) collecting taxes.<sup>81</sup> But post-communist oligarchs emerged with much greater speed and influence, which makes them unique in history.<sup>82</sup>

In this line of argument, delayed reform and oligarchic development form a vicious circle: as oligarchs capture state policy for self-interest, they continue to secure rents and privileges gained from non-transparent lobbying.<sup>83</sup> Such state-capturing power of oligarchs includes their capacity to determine election results and broad policy lines. The immense scope of political influence is what differentiates post-Soviet oligarchs from rent-seeking capitalist tycoons elsewhere.

From an optimistic viewpoint, political influence of oligarchs will be reduced with the development of modern institutions, such as parliamentary systems with proportional elections, as well as by the growth of media freedom.<sup>84</sup> But there are many pessimistic voices saying that borrowed Western institutions do not become

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<sup>81</sup> Havrylyshyn (2000) brings up this analogy with Mancur Olson’s model of the political economy of development.

<sup>82</sup> A comparison with “robber barons” may be misleading for two reasons. First, the industrial tycoons in the US accumulated their initial wealth from entrepreneurial value-added activity, whereas post-Soviet oligarchs gained pre-existing state assets at below-market prices through insider privilege. Second, the US already had at least “rudimentary” contract-enforcement and rule of law when the wealth of “robber barons” took shape – in contrast to the post-Soviet environment. That contrast is discussed in greater detail by Havrylyshyn (2006), pp. 199-202.

<sup>83</sup> Havrylyshyn, 2006.

<sup>84</sup> Aslund, *ibid.*

viable in post-Soviet societies. A leading post-Soviet media market entrepreneur bitterly remarks:

“I have lost many of the convictions and apparent truisms that developed during the collapse of the USSR and what seemed to be a victory of the Western model of democracy... With time, I realized that much of what works well in the US and, in a very different way, also works in European countries – is not fitting for Russia or Ukraine where it is either rejected or is adapted with great difficulty.”<sup>85</sup>

Likewise, another Ukrainian publicist observes that “attempts to borrow fundamental institutions from Western countries deliver only fake external forms, whereas the internal foundation of Ukraine’s society remains unchanged.”<sup>86</sup> Both of those commentaries emphasize the weakness of civil society due to “pre-civic” identities, values and ethical norms: “People who tell lies on a daily basis, and for whom corruption is an inseparable part of their living, cannot seriously put forward civic demands.”<sup>87</sup>

One example of “fake” post-Soviet institutions is “elections with predictable outcomes” that increasingly become a “ceremonial accessory of regime legitimation”.<sup>88</sup> A Russian scholar and liberal activist suggested that his country’s political system should be defined as “electoral clanism” because its elections “are merely the means of settling disputes among post-totalitarian clans that generally operate outside the law or in a situation of legal confusion.”

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<sup>85</sup> Oleksandr Rodniansky, interview to *Ukrainska Pravda*, June 30, 2010 (translation from Russian).

<sup>86</sup> Liudmila Khodos in *Ukrainska Pravda*, November 15, 2010 (translation from Ukrainian).

<sup>87</sup> Rodniansky, *ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Khodos, *ibid.*

From that perspective, “hasty introduction of free elections” after the fall of Soviet communism was dangerous and harmful because it had not been preceded by the development of a new “legal system and a legal way of thinking” that would include such features as independent courts, the rule of law, separation of powers, independence of the media, and religious and ideological freedoms.<sup>89</sup>

This point is consistent with Fareed Zacharia’s thesis about the “rise of illiberal democracy,” as well as with Karen Dawisha’s reminder that early Western democracies, including American, developed for a long time without universal suffrage.<sup>90</sup>

#### **1.4. Ukraine as a Showcase of Post-Soviet Ambiguity**

The ambiguities, puzzles, and paradoxes of post-Soviet politics and societies are brightly demonstrated in the example of Ukraine – the country that is sometimes called a “bellwether” of the post-Soviet space.<sup>91</sup> Its path has been described as “the muddle way”<sup>92</sup>, “sovereignty with uncertainty”<sup>93</sup>, “movement without change, and change without movement”<sup>94</sup>, and “a study in ambiguity”<sup>95</sup>.

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<sup>89</sup> Alexander Lukin. Electoral Democracy or Electoral Clanism? Russian Democratization and Theories of Transition. In: Archie Brown (ed.) XXXXXXXXXXXX, 2003, p. 543-544.

<sup>90</sup> Karen Dawisha. Electocracies and the Hobbesian Fishbowl of Postcommunist Politics. *Between Past and Future*, pp. 293-299.

<sup>91</sup> A characterization proposed by Nadia Diuk *Democracy After Communism*, Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (eds.), 2002, pp. 232-239.

<sup>92</sup> Hans Van Zon. *Alternative Scenarios for Central Europe: Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary*. Avebury, 1994.

From the standpoint of democratization paradigm, Ukraine appears to be a perpetual “swing state”. Its post-Soviet history is rendered in consecutive cycles of “democratic breakthroughs” alternated with “authoritarian reversals”. Every declared “breakthrough” would raise high expectations, but then yield bitter disenchantments.

In 1991, Ukraine was seen as a hopeful of democracy and market reforms: its chances for success were estimated as “the most promising” among the former Soviet republics. Yet by the end of Leonid Kravchuk’s presidency in 1994, the country resembled a “failed state” and was described as “a case study in how to wreck the economy.”<sup>96</sup>

A peaceful transfer of presidency to Leonid Kuchma and his announcement of comprehensive reforms, along with relatively orderly and competitive parliamentary elections in 1994 and 1998 were praised as advances of democracy and placed Ukraine in the frontrunner position of post-Soviet democratization. At that time, many observers began to consider Ukraine a fully consolidated democracy.<sup>97</sup> However, Kuchma’s second term in office (1999-2004) was characterized as “creeping authoritarianism”<sup>98</sup> and “rising super-

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<sup>93</sup> Diuk, *ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Marta Dyczok. *Ukraine: Movement without Change, Change without Movement*. Routledge, 2000.

<sup>95</sup> Orest Subtelny. [in Zviglianych, ed.] 2000.

<sup>96</sup> The Economist, May 27, 1994.

<sup>97</sup> D’Anieri 2006, p. 4.

<sup>98</sup> Andrew Wilson, 2000, p. 195-206.

presidentialism”,<sup>99</sup> whereas Ukraine’s political system got to be defined as “hybrid ambiguous”<sup>100</sup> and “electoral authoritarian”.<sup>101</sup>

Prior to the Orange Revolution of 2004, it appeared that Ukraine’s civil society and political opposition were even weaker than in Russia.<sup>102</sup> The Orange Revolution was hailed as a breakthrough towards a long-term durable democracy.<sup>103</sup> But five years later, when Viktor Yanukovich succeeded Viktor Yushchenko in winning the presidential election, this development was interpreted as “the death of the Orange Revolution”<sup>104</sup> which thus apparently had been “for naught”.<sup>105</sup> Under Yanukovich presidency, as shown by the Freedom House’s recent analysis and rankings, the country is moving to authoritarian rule again.<sup>106</sup>

This confusing sequence of ups and downs eventually created a perception of “Ukraine fatigue” in many Western capitals. After the failure of the Orange Revolution, Ukraine fatigue “returned with a vengeance.”<sup>107</sup> Looking back, Western diplomats and EU officials admit with bitterness that important aspects of Ukraine’s politics evaded their understanding. Dietmar Studemann, who was among

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<sup>99</sup> Diuk, *ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Larry Diamond. “Elections Without Democracy: Thinking About Hybrid Regimes,” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 13 (April 2002): 21-35.

<sup>101</sup> Larry Diamond. “The State of Democratization at the Beginning of the 21st Century,” *The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, Winter/Spring 2005, p. 15.

<sup>102</sup> Francis Fukuyama, interview to *Ukrainska Pravda*, July 24, 2012. (In Russian).

<sup>103</sup> Aslund and McFaul, 2006.

<sup>104</sup> *Time Magazine*, Feb. 3, 2010.

<sup>105</sup> *Christian Science Monitor*, Jan. 15, 2010.

<sup>106</sup> *Nations in Transit 2012* report by the Freedom House.

<sup>107</sup> Steven Pifer. Curing ‘Ukraine Fatigue’. *New York Times*, Feb. 9, 2010.

the EU mediators of the international “round table” in the Orange Revolution, subsequently recalled:

“For the European diplomats who were present at the negotiations table, this looked like a civilized compromise, a “European” way of the political system’s development. They did not take into account that ‘political balance’ in a developed European democracy and in Ukraine are very different things. [...] We in Western Europe believe that members of parliament elected by the people represent the people. However, the parties in the Supreme Rada were groups that only pursued political and economic interests of their leaders. They did not represent the people’s interests. That is what the European mediators failed to understand at that time.”<sup>108</sup>

Javier Solana – a long-time chief foreign policy official of the European Union – subsequently called Ukraine “one of the biggest frustrations of his life” and said he later realized that Ukraine’s political class was immature and “below average” quality.<sup>109</sup> A prominent member of the European Parliament, while commenting on Ukraine’s prospects of accession to the EU, outspokenly remarked: “Many in the European Union believe that Ukraine cannot be joined with the EU because it is a post-Soviet country, but political correctness does not allow them to say so in public.”<sup>110</sup>

Ukraine has been discussed as a success story of the post-Soviet world – a country that was able to become a market economy and a democracy.<sup>111</sup> But a democracy of a peculiar flavor: as Timothy Garton Ash aptly observed, it is “a

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<sup>108</sup> Interview to *Deutsche Welle*, published on September 6, 2010 (in Ukrainian).

<sup>109</sup> Interview to *Radio Liberty*, published on April 14, 2012 (in Ukrainian).

<sup>110</sup> Marek Siwiec quoted speaking at an international policy round table, *Ukrainska Pravda*, Sept. 23, 2011.

<sup>111</sup> Anders Aslund. *How Ukraine Became a Market Economy and a Democracy*. Peterson Institute, 2009.



world closer to *The Sopranos* than to *The West Wing*.”<sup>112</sup> The same point was made by a celebrated Russian newsmaker when he remarked: “The difference between Russian and Ukrainian politics is the difference between a cemetery and a madhouse.”<sup>113</sup>

Despite the advances to democracy, Ukraine continues to be ‘a nation at the crossroads’.<sup>114</sup> For a long time, it has looked “perpetually unsure whether it truly wants to plump for a western way or to keep at least one foot in the Soviet past.”<sup>115</sup> Presently, Western observers continue to ask: “Will Ukraine ultimately be “Western” or “Eastern”? Will its political culture come to resemble Europe's or Russia's? Will Ukraine eventually join European and transatlantic institutions?”<sup>116</sup> The country continues to face those “big questions” without definite answers.

Academic literature addresses the ambiguities of Ukraine’s transition in several different ways. Notable emphasis was made on the challenge of “multiple transitions”. That argument reminds that there is an inherent tension between the agenda of democratization and the agenda of economic market reforms. In Ukraine’s case, the challenge is even more complicated because there is a “quadruple transition”

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<sup>112</sup> Timothy Garton Ash in *The Guardian*, 10 Feb. 2010.

<sup>113</sup> Clifford J. Levy. “TV Refugees From Moscow.” *New York Times*, January 23, 2010.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Adrian Karatnycky. Ukraine at the Crossroads. *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 6, Number 1, January 1995.

<sup>115</sup> *The Economist*, October 17, 2002.

<sup>116</sup> Anne Applebaum. Ukraine's democratic evolution on hold, for now. *Washington Post*, Feb. 9, 2010.

agenda: in addition to developing the institutions of democracy and free market, it also includes the tasks of state-building and nation-building.<sup>117</sup>

From this perspective, nation-building is seen as the critically important part of the “quadruple package” because a strong national identity is deemed to be a prerequisite for a sense of national solidarity and successful mobilization, hence for robust civil society and democratic consolidation. Thus, Ukraine’s divided identity – an obstacle for national integration – is what impedes the country’s civil society growth. By the same token, weak national identity is likely to strengthen the sense of nostalgia for the former communist regime.<sup>118</sup>

Ukraine’s modern identity is often pictured as a set of dichotomous divisions between “East” and “West”: Russian vs. Ukrainian speakers, Orthodox vs. Catholic parishes, communities with European cultural orientations vs. those oriented towards Moscow, supporters of accession to NATO vs. those who vehemently protested against such plans. To illustrate this dichotomy, journalists often juxtapose the images of two Ukrainian cities, Lviv (formerly the Polish Lwow and the Austria-Hungary’s Lemberg) and Donetsk (formerly Russian Hughesovka and the Soviet Stalino). The two cities live, speak, and vote as differently as they look. In both of them, residents have talked about “the opposite side” with as much animosity as there has been between the Serbs and the Chroats.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Taras Kuzio. Transition in Post-Communist States: Triple or Quadruple? *Politics*, 2001, vol 21 (3), 168-177.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>119</sup> That comparison was offered more than once. E.g., “Easterners are confirmed in their suspicions that many westerners are fascists at heart, who willingly co-operated

However, a deeper look into Ukraine's identity becomes "a study in ambiguity" rather than dichotomy.<sup>120</sup> Ukraine has inherited an ambiguous national identity due to a mix of cultural influences from two powerful neighbors – Poland and Russia – over the centuries of its own stateless history. Mykola Riabchuk, the Ukrainian political essayist who thoroughly explored the "two Ukraines" theme, has observed, paradoxically, that "nobody can say where one half ends and the other begins."<sup>121</sup> The two opposing influences, each with its own distinct set of myths, narratives, and visions of the past and the future, are clearly present today, but seldom in pure and antagonistic manifestations. For the most part, they have produced an ambiguous intermixture that is found all through the country, albeit in different proportions. Moreover, even individual Ukrainians, according to Riabchuk, tend to be "ambivalent, vague and nebulous" in their identities and ideological orientations.

Riabchuk concludes that, whereas there are "two clearly defined and visible Ukraines," there is also the immense space between them that can be defined as "the third Ukraine" which for the most part is "invisible, mute, uncertain, undecided, ideologically ambivalent and ambiguous." It serves as "the major battlefield and the

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with the Nazis (the Serbs think much the same about the Croats)", observed a Western journalist (The Unruly Child. A Survey of Ukraine. *The Economist*, May 7, 1994, p. 16). Two decades later, a Ukrainian commentator remarks that a westerner who identifies himself as Ukrainian in the census and an Easterner with the same self-identification are in fact "culturally more different than a Czech and a Slovak, or a Serb and a Croat." (Mikhail Dubiniansky in *Ukrainska Pravda*, September 7, 2012).

<sup>120</sup> This historical narrative is articulately presented by Orest Subtelny (in Zviaglynych, 2000) .

<sup>121</sup> Riabchuk *Two Ukraines*, 2003,

major prize in the protracted contest between the two vociferating but minor Ukraines, the ‘Soviet’ and the ‘European.’”<sup>122</sup>

Thus, Riabchuk’s exploration of “ambivalent identity” modifies Kuzio’s argument about Ukraine’s “divided identity.” His approach, however, does not question the priority of nation-building agenda.

Another viewpoint stands in more resolute disagreement with postulated primacy of nation-building. It is brightly articulated in Steven Kotkin’s essay “Trashcanistan” where he argues that nation-building projects in former Soviet republics were essentially hijacked by the ruling bureaucracies (former communist Nomenklatura) and have often served as a shield for the rulers’ private interests.<sup>123</sup> As the result, we see “parasitic states” with “government-led extortion rackets, gangs in power, and shadow economies.” From observing post-Soviet developments in “nation-building”, Kotkin concludes:

“ ‘National’ self-determination is too often a recipe for Trashcanistan – for systemic malfeasance and economic involution, with convenient cover for the worst political scoundrels and their legions of apologists. [...] Wrapping an executive branch syndicate in the “legitimacy” of the nation may be the essence of Trashcanistan, but national or ethnic distinctions do not carry the mass political weight that is regularly attributed to them.”<sup>124</sup>

Kotkin shows that his conclusion is fully applicable to Ukraine where President Kuchma’s machinery of political manipulation, intimidation, extortion, embezzlement and money laundering exceeded “a mafia don’s wildest dreams.” At

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Steven Kotkin, *Trashcanistan*, 2002

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, p. 32

the same time, Ukrainian intellectuals' "tormented search for a "national" identity" has distracted and impeded demands for responsive and accountable governance.

Kotkin's insight is corroborated by thoughtful analysis from Ukraine's leading political theorists of liberal orientation.<sup>125</sup> Volodymyr Polokhalo and Oleksandr Dergachov point out that since 1991 Ukraine's higher party-and-state bureaucracy "appropriated the idea of sovereignty", "established their monopoly on patriotism", and concentrated on "state-building to fit themselves". This was a neo-statist project that "cemented" the country's political system. It also substituted the more urgent task of reviving the Ukrainian society. At the same time, those who proclaimed the goal "to strengthen the state" as the nation's priority, pragmatically sought personal profit from such efforts.<sup>126</sup>

Polokhalo and Dergachov were among the first to draw attention to systemic incongruency and duplicity of Ukraine's post-communist development. They mentioned that Ukraine's problems reflected abnormal co-existence of incompatible traits. One such incongruent pair was the intrinsic parochialism of the old leaders (who had risen to power as provincial bureaucrats dependent on guidance from Moscow) and the new demands of independent statehood. Another example was the combination of "economic, political and mental bolshevism debris" with the requirements of liberal reforms (the writers aptly remarked that universal and

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<sup>125</sup> Volodymyr Polokhalo and Oleksandr Dergachov were the founding editors of Ukraine's leading political science journal, *Politychna Dumka* ("Political Thought"). A collection of the journal's papers was translated and published in the US under the title *The Political Analysis of Postcommunism. Understanding Postcommunist Ukraine* (Texas A&M University Press, 1997).

<sup>126</sup> Oleksandr Dergachov and Volodymyr Polokhalo. "The Metamorphoses of Post-communist Power." *Politychna Dumka*, vol 7 (1), 1996. (In Ukrainian).

unconditional acceptance of unspecified “reforms” was one of the biggest and the most stunning myths in post-communist Ukraine).

About the same time, Sherman Garnett observed that Ukraine’s apparent westernization was inconsistent with its stagnant internal development: those two features were incompatible “like oil and water” unable to mix.<sup>127</sup>

Altogether, such observations combine into a picture of ambivalent and amorphous society with likewise double-minded but pragmatic and self-centered leadership. That double-mindedness was strikingly exposed in the “Kuchmagate”<sup>128</sup> scandal: it brought to the world’s attention “a glaring gap between public verisimilitude and private cynicism” in the culture of Ukraine’s political class.<sup>129</sup> The “secret tapes” revealed that President Kuchma’s system of governance was largely built on informal tools of power and coercion -- not unlike an organized crime syndicate, as pointed out by Stephen Kotkin. Keith Darden famously characterized this system as “the blackmail state.”<sup>130</sup>

The revelations of “Kuchmagate” prompted Andrew Wilson to propose an explanatory model of “virtual democracy” for the “strange post-Soviet world.” He

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<sup>127</sup> Sherman W. Garnett. *Like Oil and Water: Ukraine’s External Westernization and Internal Stagnation. State and Institution Building in Ukraine.* Taras Kuzio, Robert S. Kravchuk and Paul D’Anieri (eds.). Palgrave MacMillan, 1999.

<sup>128</sup> Also known as “Tapegate” or “the Cassette Scandal”. It broke out on November 28, 2000 when audio recordings of President Kuchma’s confidential conversations were made public and implicated him in numerous crimes including abduction and killing of the journalist Georgiy Gongadze. The scandal ignited mass protests motivated by moral outrage against the regime; those events became a precursor to the Orange Revolution four years later.

<sup>129</sup> Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine’s New Virtual Politics. EECR*, 2001 .

<sup>130</sup> Keith A. Darden. *Blackmail as a Tool of State Domination: Ukraine under Kuchma. East European Constitutional Review*, 10 (2/3), 2001.

argued that the “virtual politics” model provided a better way of understanding modern Russia or Ukraine than “standard academic unilinear transition models.”<sup>131</sup> According to Wilson, the key element of that model was “the culture of virtual politics – where a public world of gesture and image-making masks an alternative reality of private intrigues and complicity.” He emphasized that this model would apply to certain hybrid regimes where there was “a gap between rhetoric and reality, between performance and underperformance.”<sup>132</sup> Wilson characterized those post-Soviet polities as “the looking-glass world of ‘clones’ and ‘doubles,’ of ‘administrative resources’ and ‘kompromat,’” and “a paradise for the most brazen liars and guileful con artists.”<sup>133</sup>

Ukraine, in Wilson’s estimate, was “one of the most virtual” of all post-communist states – in part, because the Ukrainian state was, paradoxically, too weak and too strong at the same time: “too weak to resist falling prey to special interests” and yet “too powerful in other people’s lives.”<sup>134</sup> For that state, the model of virtual politics was “a short-cut means of retaining power” and “an edifice of illusion:” its goal was, in lieu of a strong repressive machine, to create a *perception* that the people “are trapped in some kind of a box – in other words, to convince them that there is no alternative.”<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Wilson 2001, introduction. The argument put forward in that article was eventually expanded in the book “Virtual Politics...”

<sup>132</sup> 2001 *ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> 2005, p. xiii.

<sup>134</sup> 2001 *ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> Andrew Wilson. *Ukraine’s Orange Revolution*, 2005, p. 201.

Wilson noted virtuality in many aspects of Ukrainian politics, such as “the masked identity” of key political players; the inability of voters to challenge or even verify what politicians publicly proclaimed; high incidence of fake political parties (categorized, in part, as “broadcast parties” and “convenience parties”); prevalence of all kinds of myths in the political discourse; “ephemerality” of divisions between opposing political groups; and, last but not least, “lack of congruity between political principles and political behavior.”<sup>136</sup>

Andrew Wilson’s model of “virtual politics” is not (nor is intended to be) a fully comprehensive explanation of Ukraine’s political realities, but its plausibility cannot be doubted. The best proof of this model’s value was Ukraine’s Orange Revolution of 2004. Wilson’s narrative of its causes and course serves a good example that illustrates the model.<sup>137</sup> Whereas the model provides a sound interpretation of the underlying motive of the Orange Revolution. Essentially, that motive was the moral outrage against suffocating hopelessness of the rotten system of virtual politics. Wilson’s model provides the “detail” that brings sense into otherwise vague and abstract explanatory variable of “regime’s organizational power” proposed by other researchers.<sup>138</sup> It shows that state’s coercive power is decapitated not by mere numbers of protesters, but by a perceived consensus of the protest legitimacy. In Wilson’s words, there was one simple common denominator in the motley mix of the Orange Revolution’s actors and voices:

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<sup>136</sup> *ibid.* 2001

<sup>137</sup> 2005 OR – ch 3-8.

<sup>138</sup> Lucan Way. The Real Causes of the Color Revolutions. *Journal of Democracy*, 19 (3), 2008.



“Students wanted a change in political culture, the poor wanted a change in political culture, and small and medium-sized businesses wanted a change in political culture.”<sup>139</sup>

Wilson argues that Ukraine’s Orange Revolution was “the first revolution within and against the system of virtual politics” (and it therefore cannot be easily placed in one analytical category with other events labeled as “colored” or “electoral” revolutions).<sup>140</sup>

But the system of virtual politics did not end with the Orange Revolution. Ukraine’s “post-Orange” political history is an exciting tale of society’s efforts to emancipate from the culture of “looking-glass world.”

Some see this story as an ongoing fight between the society and the state. “Society demands political rights and civil liberties, but the Soviet-styled and repression-oriented state is not prepared to play by new democratic rules,” remarks a columnist in Ukraine’s most influential analytical newspaper.<sup>141</sup>

Others feel that the hardest struggle for the Ukrainian society is the struggle with its own Soviet past that remains hauntingly present in many aspects: “We have to admit that economically, socially, and mentally, Ukraine is still a sanctuary of Sovietism.”<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Wilson OR p. 199.

<sup>140</sup> My detailed argumentation in support of this thesis is presented here: Peter Voitsekhovsky. “In the Footsteps of 1989: Ukraine’s Orange Revolution as a Carnival of Anti-politics.” *The End and the Beginning: the Revolutions of 1989 and the Resurgence of History*, edited by Vladimir Tismaneanu and Bogdan C. Iacob. CEU Press, 2012.

<sup>141</sup> Vadim Karasiov Point of no return dt 18 02 11 (in Russian).

<sup>142</sup> Yuriy Sobolev. The Post-Soviet Ukraine ZN 12 aug 2011. in Russian

The Ukrainian state continues to get characterized as “a post-Soviet Leviathan” that lacks broad social support. In its absence, the regime is based on “a contract of the political class and the oligarchy,” but that system can only stay afloat by means of its “strategy of uncertainties.” Thus, the regime intentionally maintains uncertainties, both within the elites and the society at large, by “playing with the rules” (instead of playing by the rules).<sup>143</sup> Such “strategy of uncertainties” becomes a sequel to early post-Soviet trend of “ambivalence to ambiguity.”<sup>144</sup> Like ten years earlier, Steven Kotkin’s words seem very much to the point again: “Ukraine has gotten its state and is eating it, too.”<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Karasev, *ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> Mykola Riabchuk emphasized in his study of “the ambivalent Ukraine” that post-Soviet oligarchy had a vested interest in keeping the society “atomized, confused, and alienated.” Thus “ambivalence turns into ambiguity, breeds cynicism and indifference, and people become easy targets for brainwashing and manipulation.” (Riabchuk *Two U* – p. ). #4 ref

<sup>145</sup> Kotkin, *ibid.* p 34.

## **CHAPTER 2. PSEUDO-MODERNITY: THE ULTIMATE LEGACY OF THE SOVIET CIVILIZATION**

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### **2.1. “Deficient modernity” of Soviet communism**

If modern institutions in post-Soviet polities appear ambiguous and virtual, then, in order to understand their true character, it is appropriate to examine post-Soviet developmental legacies in their broad relationship with modernity.

For those who considered the Soviet system a genuinely New Civilization with a promise of a “quick leap into a superior kind of modernity,”<sup>146</sup> its failure signified a crisis of modernity.<sup>147</sup>

From an opposing perspective, it is deemed fundamentally wrong to view the Soviet system as “another path to a common, universal modernity.”<sup>148</sup> Those who make this argument emphasize the fallacy of accepting the Soviet Union as a coherent and rationally functioning system.<sup>149</sup> That fallacy was made by

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<sup>146</sup> The quote is from Steven Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*, 1997, p. 358. “*Soviet Communism: A New Civilization*” is the title of a book by Sydney and Beatrice Webb, who were the deans of Western Social Studies and the founders of the London School of Economics. As reported by Robert Conquest, the question mark in the title of the book’s first edition was dropped in its second edition that came out in 1937. According to Conquest, their perspective had followers in the subsequent generations of academic Sovietologists (Robert Conquest. *Academe and the Soviet Myth. The National Interest*. #31, 1993).

<sup>147</sup> This point is discussed in: Larry Ray. Post-modernity or modernity revisited? *British Journal of Sociology*, 48 (4), dec. 1997.

<sup>148</sup> Martin Malia. A Fatal Logic. *The National Interest*. No.31, Spring, 1993).

<sup>149</sup> Peter Rutland. Sovietology: Notes for a Post-Mortem. *National Interest*, #31, Spring, 1993.

Sovietologists who fundamentally misunderstood the nature of their subject” and assumed a universalist meaning of such concepts as “society” or “modernization.”<sup>150</sup>

Indeed, it needs to be reminded that “all institutions in the Soviet society with names like labor union, church, newspaper, university” and so on could not be taken at their face value because they “bore very little resemblance to their counterparts in the non-communist world.”<sup>151</sup> Martin Malia takes this argument further and points out that it was wrong to discuss the Soviet project of “building socialism” in terms of “modernization” and “development” – because those categories “do nothing to explain the startling outcome of the Soviet adventure.”<sup>152</sup>

The Soviet project was driven by a utopian aspiration and could only be pursued “through a mixture of ideological illusion and raw coercion.”<sup>153</sup> Its fundamental contradiction was between the goal of a rationally ordered society and the reliance on utopian faith. This latter component of the Soviet system is rightly seen as pre-modern.<sup>154</sup> Contemporary Russian scholars speak about the rejection of “market anarchy” as a “medieval” trait in Marxism.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Malia, *ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> Francis Fukuyama. The Modernizing Imperative: the USSR as an Ordinary Country. *The National Interest*, No. 31 (Spring 1993).

<sup>152</sup> Martin Malia, *ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* Consistent with that formula, the Soviet project collapsed when the illusion could no longer delude, and the will to coerce “accordingly evaporated.”

<sup>154</sup> Speaking of pre-modern elements of the Soviet system, Larry Ray (*ibid.*) mentions the cult of ‘honor’, ‘struggle,’ loyalty and obedience.

<sup>155</sup> Anatolii Vishnevskii, *The Sickie and the Rouble: Conservative Modernization in the USSR* (in Russian). Moscow: OGI, 1998. Also available in the French translation: Anatole Vichnevski, *La faucille et le rouble: La modernisation conservatrice en URSS*. Paris: Gallimard, 2000.

In the prevailing contemporary view, the Soviet project represented a deficient version of modernity (also referred to as „aberrated,”<sup>156</sup> “distorted,”<sup>157</sup> and “illiberal”<sup>158</sup> modernity). Apart from the regime’s ideocratic nature, another factor that is deemed to have had a distorting effect on the Soviet modernity was the country’s historical path of a late modernizer (what Yegor Gaidar called the “catch-up civilization” path).<sup>159</sup> In S.N. Eisenstadt’s formulation, the Soviet society in its modernizing effort “selected and totalized the Jacobin ideological and institutional elements of modernity.”<sup>160</sup>

Anatolii Vishnevskii describes this modernization as “one-sided” – it emphasized economic industrialization, and measured its achievement in the millions of tons of steel and coal production. At the same, its model of social mobilization was based on a conservative and “archaic” type of social conscience which, in Weberian terms, was “value-rational.” The Soviet society was gradually evolving towards the “goal-rational” type of behavior – that is more consistent with liberal modernity – but the Soviet system was trying to eradicate such behavior and was labeling it as “vestiges of the capitalist past.” As Francis Fukuyama remarked, “the

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The author also notes that “different aspects of Marxist utopias are now more strongly entrenched in the mass conscience of Russians than the rational side of Marxism.”

<sup>156</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski. *The Grand Failure: the Birth and Death of Communism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.* Collier Books, 1990.

<sup>157</sup> S.N.Eisenstadt. The Breakdown of Communist Regimes and the Vicissitudes of Modernity. *Daedalus*, 121 (2), Spring 1992.

<sup>158</sup> Vladimir Tismaneanu. *The Devil in History: Communism, Fascism, and Some Lessons of the Twentieth Century.* University of California Press, 2012.

<sup>159</sup> Yegor Gaidar. *State and Evolution.* UW Press, 2003.

<sup>160</sup> S.N. Eisenstadt, *ibid.*, p. 33.

Soviet society was evolving independently of the Soviet state.” In his view, the “modernizing imperative” resulted in socio-economic change and the emergence of “proto-civil society” in the USSR, and that made the Soviet system obsolete.<sup>161</sup> A similar point is made by Johann Arnason who described Communism as a “self-destructive form of modernity.”<sup>162</sup>

What the Soviet order failed to achieve was a legal-rational system of “impersonal trust.” Larry Ray describes impersonal trust as a key factor of the modern organization: he defines it as “relations of trust among anonymous and functionally different actors.” Impersonal trust is ensured by internal controls such as audit, surveillance, regulation, and other forms of governance; in other words, by “a balance between institutionalized trust and distrust.”<sup>163</sup>

But the Soviet state could not develop embedded legal-rational institutions: its principle was the “rule of men” (party chiefs)<sup>164</sup> – that is antithetical to the “rule of law.” Under Stalin, the Soviet order cultivated high institutional distrust combined with repressive coercion. Eventually, as repression weakened, impersonal distrust remained, but was complimented by a system of “trust based on personal commitments and client networks.” That system nourished “a culture of

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<sup>161</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> Johann P. Arnason. Communism and Modernity. *Daedalus*, 121 (1), Winter, 1992.

<sup>163</sup> Larry Ray, *ibid.*, p. 552.

<sup>164</sup> The masculine gender of this phrase is fully appropriate because all “first secretary” positions in the CPSU from district level and up were invariably held by males; in every party office there would typically be one token position of a deputy chief reserved for a female, usually in charge of social and cultural policy. An example is the role of Yekaterina Furtseva in Khrushchev’s Politburo.

informality and illegality” that revealed itself in Russia’s post-Soviet “mafia capitalism.”<sup>165</sup>

Piotr Sztompka discusses that deficiency of communist modernity more comprehensively -- as a paradoxical contrast between the advances of “tangible modernity” (such as industrialization, urbanization, technological and educational progress, etc.) and the destruction of the “intangible tissue” of cultural modernity. He describes the outcome as “the syndrome of civilizational incompetence” inherent in post-communist societies. Its features, in Stompka’s opinion, include: a habit of blind obedience, reluctance to take decisions, avoidance of personal responsibility, lack of respect for law, institutionalized evasion of rules, distrust of authorities, and double standards of talk and conduct.<sup>166</sup>

In a concise formula, the “grand idea” of cultural modernity can be defined as the “greater depth of human design.” Karol Soltan explains this concept as follows:

“Modernity lifts the chains of inevitability that bind all pre-modern, traditional societies, dramatically expanding the scale and depth of human design as opposed to organic growth or evolution. The world increasingly does not impose itself on us. We make it ourselves [...] Legislation (made law) replaces found law, and our lives are increasingly governed by formal, special-purpose organizations. In the human sphere we see [...] organized efforts to design the furniture of our minds.”<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Larry Ray, *ibid.*, pp. 552-554.

<sup>166</sup> Piotr Sztompka. Civilizational Incompetence: the Trap of Post-Communist Societies. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 22 (2), 1993, pp. 85-95.

<sup>167</sup> Karol Soltan. 1989 as Rebirth. *Between Past and Future: Revolutions of 1989 and their Aftermath*. Sorin Antohi and Vladimir Tismaneanu (eds.). CEU Press, 2000, p. 26.

From this perspective, the project of post-communist transformation can be understood as an effort of realignment with modernity: a rebirth of post-communist societies in a new civilizational character based on the principle of “human design.”

The validity of such interpretive frame is supported by a regression analysis of “success scores” of post-communist transformation in 28 countries in relation to indicators of their societal values from the World Values Survey.<sup>168</sup> That study showed that some value indicators -- generally considered to be important prerequisites for success of democratization -- were not very meaningful statistically. For instance, the value of participation in government or the approval and disapproval of competition, taken as the independent variables, had little impact on the dependent variable of country success scores. However, the indicator that was shown to have the biggest impact on country success scores was the amount of support for the survey statement: “I feel that I have no control over changing my life; what I do has no real effect on what happens to my life.” What that statement reflects is an “organic” type of conscience – a mindset of being locked in the “chains of inevitability.” Nations where this perception was the strongest fared the most poorly as post-communist reformers (e.g. Belarus, Azerbaijan, Bosnia). The leaders of the “successful reformers” list were those countries where the mindset of “inevitability” was the weakest (Slovenia, Hungary, Estonia).

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<sup>168</sup> Full text in: Peter Voitsekhovskiy. Ascent to Freedom: Value Legacies and Societal Change in Post-Communist Countries. Report at WPSA Convention, 2002. Brief findings of this study are presented in Addendum I.



## **2.2 . Potemkinism: a Perpetual Trait of Russian and Soviet History**

Guy Sorman, a celebrated Western philosopher, provocatively observed: “Potemkin is of greater help than Marx and Lenin for understanding the USSR.” Upon visiting the Soviet Union in 1989, he described it as “a land of scenery, speeches, theatricality, and duplicity,” and noted that “Potemkinism was and still remains a life principle of all Russian regimes.”<sup>169</sup>

For Sorman, even Gorbachev’s perestroika was “the highest degree of the Potemkinist thought.”<sup>170</sup> He perceived that perestroika declarations were inconsistent and often meaningless; that Gorbachev was making a futile attempt to be the Pope and Luther at the same time; and that the ultimate goal of all those efforts was “to rescue the Communist Party.”

Sorman noted that the causes of Russia’s “eternal duplicity” and its tradition of “converting the idea into the *mise en scene*” should be searched in the country’s history:

Perhaps, [the reason is that] since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Russia has been trying to look European but remained deeply Asiatic? Perhaps, its pseudo-European capital, St. Petersburg – Leningrad, is only a set of stage props in a theater of the still barbaric people? [...] The scenery and speeches make up for the backwardness – or rather, what Russians themselves perceive as historical backwardness in comparison with the Western model.”<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Guy Sorman. *Sortir du socialisme*. Fayard, 1990. This quote is translated from the Russian edition: Guy Sorman. *Vyiti iz sotsializma* (Exiting from Socialism). Novosti, 1991, pp. 15-16.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., pp. 39-41.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

Before Sorman, other Western travelers to Russia were making similar observations. Perhaps the most famous account was made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Marquis de Custine who remarked, “I came here to see a country, but what I find is a theater.” Explaining his negative perception, he wrote:

“I don't reproach the Russians for being what they are; what I blame them for is their desire to appear to be what we [Europeans] are.... They are much less interested in being civilized than in making us believe them so.”<sup>172</sup>

In his study of Russia's historical path as ‘a catch-up civilization,’ Yegor Gaidar points out that the three states which historically shielded Europe from adversary invasions – Spain, Austria, and Russia – exhibited similar historical traits: “fortification of the state as a bulwark against the East, bureaucratization, and delayed development.”<sup>173</sup> But Russia had to pay a much higher price than the others: “the cult of the state warped the mind of the nation” and created complexes that do not allow Russia to look at itself and the world “with a clear and rational eye.”<sup>174</sup>

That was vividly demonstrated in Peter the Great's modernization project at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Russia's modernization was based on state coercion and mobilization – unlike in Western Europe where industrial development was a product of private initiative and capital. Emperor Peter's reforms were an incongruous mix of enlightenment and terror. A contemporary Russian publicist emphasizes this contrast with bitterness:

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<sup>172</sup> These quotations are taken from George F. Kennan, *The Marquis de Custine and his Russia in 1839*, Princeton University Press, 1971.

<sup>173</sup> Yegor Gaidar. *State and Evolution: Russia's Search for a Free Market*. UW Press, 2003, p. 25.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

“The young Tsar Peter was fascinated and charmed by the atmosphere of Europe when he came to Amsterdam. He liked everything, from magnificent shipyards to clean pavements and cozy coffee houses, and he immediately wanted to transfer all that to Russia. But he also wanted to continue decapitating his enemies *in propria persona*. And, after drinking coffee with foreign guests, he would go down into a basement torture chamber and personally interrogate the crown prince on the strappado.”<sup>175</sup>

In Gaidar’s assessment, Russia’s tormenting struggle in between the two paths of development -- European modernity and Asiatic despotism , without being able to permanently choose either one of them – has been the definitive controversy of its history for more than three centuries. That controversy remains topical in Putin’s Russia, as Andrey Piontkovsky points out:

“Something in the nature of the West -- that escapes the understanding of our modernizers – allows it again and again to overtake Russia with all her stockpiles of cast iron and steel, and rusty missiles, and submarines [...] Our barbaric rulers are charmed with products of the West and are eager to possess them; but they disdainfully reject the roots of the Western civilization, its atmosphere of Freedom and Dignity which they abhor.”<sup>176</sup>

Gaidar describes the product of such controversial development as “a permanent crisis of an ‘east-western’ social structure.” Russia copied the European experience “in form,” especially in its cultural aspects, but failed to establish a tradition of private property relations “unfettered by state or bureaucratic dictates.”<sup>177</sup> He adds that the bureaucracy of the Russian Empire combined the worst features of both worlds: it borrowed the mechanistic and alienated style of the Prussian

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<sup>175</sup> Andrey Piontkovsky. *Putin navsegda* (“Putin Forever”). *Novaia gazeta*, April 5, 2004 (in Russian).

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Yegor Gaidar, *ibid.*, p. 32.

bureaucracy -- but without the traditional German accuracy; and, consistent with the “eastern” tradition, it cultivated petty tyranny, lazy sloppiness, and corruption. Russia’s social structure, according to Gaidar, became “pathologically ill and permanently out of balance”: it lacked a middle class that would provide social stability. The upper aristocracy and the lower social strata “seemed to live in two different countries” and even spoke and thought in different languages – the peasants used Russian, the nobles used French.<sup>178</sup>

Ronald Hingley’s famous study of the enigmatic “Russian mind” portrays Russians as a nation of role-players who continuously “display postures” and keep “eye and ear constantly cocked for audience reaction.”<sup>179</sup> The celebrated scholar brings up many examples of this trait, both in every-day life observations and in the character of Russian leaders, from Emperor Nickolas I to Nikita Khrushchev. In Hingley’s view, Stalinist show trials of 1936-1938 were a spectacular example of how the rulers of the nation would use theatrical devices “to bolster their authority .”<sup>180</sup> Hingley notes the presence of the “show trial” principle in Soviet life, on a humbler level, in such features as “boards of shame” or “self-criticism sessions.”<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., p. 33

<sup>179</sup> Ronald Hingley. *The Russian Mind*. New York, 1977. The book’s emphasis on “the histrionic aspect” of the Russian character was noted as its most significant insight (“The Economist” book review, May 27, 1978).

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>181</sup> It may be worth noting that the tradition of “boards of shame” did not disappear in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: for example, utility fees collectors in Russia or Ukraine still publicly post lists of debtors near entrances to apartment buildings.

Ronald Hingley also devotes his attention to the stereotypic notion that “all Russians lie all the time,” as was testified by a British ambassador to Moscow back in the 16<sup>th</sup> century:

‘From the great to the small [...] the Russ neither believeth anything that another man speaketh, nor speaketh anything himself worthy to be believed.’<sup>182</sup>

Hingley quotes numerous other such testimonies, including a 16<sup>th</sup> century traveler account that, when selling captured Russians at Crimean Tatar slave auctions, a seller would always try to pass off his stock as Polish, “for the Muscovite race, being crafty and deceitful, does not bring a good price.”<sup>183</sup>

Exaggerations apart, Hingley analyzes the causes of that stereotype. Among them, he points out to the earlier discussed Russian “histrionic character trait” and civilizational duality. Another important factor, in his opinion, is the impact of living under despotism, which cultivates the survival art of “camouflage behavior” and “deception tactics.”

Hingley’s analysis highlights a stock of Russian vocabulary denoting many shades and gradations of untruthfulness, such as *ochkovtiratelstvo* (“eyewash”), *pokazukha* (“bull”), *lukavstvo* (subtle and cunning pretense), and *dvulichie* (two-facedness, duplicity).

The “Potemkin villages” of Catherine the Great were a prime example of the bull and eyewash, and became an emblem of false imitation and pretense. That

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<sup>182</sup> Ronald Hingley, *ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

phrase itself is now international, along with other famous internationalized Russian words like *vodka*, *sputnik*, and *perestroika*.

Ronald Hingley draws an important distinction between the practices of *vranyo* (fantasy-mongering; tall tales) and *lozh* (sinister untruth). A textbook example of *vranyo* is the character of Khlestakov in Gogol's *Inspector General*. According to Hingley, public *vranyo* developed by Russia's statesmen and officials is akin to "political bombast in general"; but Russian rulers, from Empress Catherine to Khrushchev, perfected its art to the virtuoso level. He notes that *vranyo* became a professionalized skill in Soviet times, as demonstrated by "officially licensed greeters" for foreign visitors, such as the Intourist guides.

In that sense, Hingley suggests that Lenin's period of the Soviet history might be called "the age of truth" – because the official spokesmen who promised the people a glorious future "on the whole believed that their promises were well founded." But the age of Stalin, in Hingley's terms, was the era of deliberate and militant *lozh*, when propaganda lost its sincerity, and "a sincere belief in anything could become a passport to disgrace and arrest."<sup>184</sup>

"Institutionalized mendacity" is traced through the ages of Russian history. Michael Speransky, a reformist-minded Russian statesman complained at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: "In no other State do political words stand in such contrast to reality as in Russia."<sup>185</sup> A century and a half later, George F. Kennan observed that there were "two images of Russian reality – the country as it actually was and as the

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p. 94-95.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

authorities wished it to appear.”<sup>186</sup> In Stalin’s times, notes Hingley, there was a likewise “array of political fictions and myths” – and, while the subjects were not necessarily expected to believe them, they were required “to affirm their acceptance as a form of ritual obeisance.”<sup>187</sup>

This helps to explain why the ordinary people would also become “experts in fabrication of falsehoods.” Ronald Hingley quotes Donald Mackenzie Wallace (a diplomatic correspondent who worked in Russia in late 19<sup>th</sup> century) who reflected:

“For ages the peasantry were exposed to the arbitrary power and ruthless exactions of those who were placed over them; and as the law gave them no means of legally protecting themselves, their only means of self-defense lay in cunning and deceit.”<sup>188</sup>

Hingley found it notable that “Russians themselves most expertly deride and denounce the very incongruities and pretenses of their own society.”<sup>189</sup> Russia’s most famous 19<sup>th</sup> century satirist, Saltykov-Shchedrin, is well known for these quotes: “The severity of Russian laws is alleviated by the lack of obligation to fulfill them.” Another of his famous quotes -- “Our governance principle is very simple: never explicitly permit anything, and never explicitly forbid anything” -- stands in remarkable accord with a line from Mikhail Zhvanetsky that refers to Russia today: “Our freedom is like a traffic signal with all three lights on.”

Two centuries after the invention of “Potemkin villages,” Russia remains entangled in a mix of truth and *vranyo*. From the earliest days of his

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<sup>186</sup> Quoted by Ronald Hingley, *ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

presidency, Vladimir Putin was described as “trying to erect the Potemkin village [of fake democracy] before the complacent West.”<sup>190</sup> Ten years later, a prominent Russian columnist speaks about the ongoing “restoration of the USSR Potemkin village”.<sup>191</sup> After years of work in Russia, a Western journalist feels that “Russia is an assembly line of Potemkin villages – they used to be made of cardboard, then they were wooden, and now they are virtual.” She concludes that “the Russian society seems deeply ill; nobody understands how to distinguish truth and lies, and help from many experts is needed in order to pull the people out of that derangement.”<sup>192</sup>

### **2.3. Pseudo-modern Features of Post-Soviet Societies**

Martin Malia, who was insightfully skeptical about the attempts to reform the Soviet Union, explained that such efforts were futile because the Soviet system was an “applied utopia:”

“applied utopias do not simply fail and fade away. The effort to realize them leads rather, through a perverse cunning of reason, to the creation of a monstrous antireality, or an inverted world.”<sup>193</sup>

Post-Soviet societies demonstrate evidence supporting this view. Richard Rose interprets post-Soviet Russia as an “antimodern society” – because its

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<sup>190</sup> Elena Bonner. Vladimir Potemkin. *Wall Street Journal*, June 17, 2003.

<sup>191</sup> Dmitry Oreshkin. *Zastriavshaia Strana* (“The Country That Stuck”). *New Times*, Aug. 22, 2011. (in Russian).

<sup>192</sup> Pilar Bonet. *Pravila Zhinzni v Rossii* (“Rules of Living in Russia”). *Esquire Russia*. October 27, 2011 (in Russian).

<sup>193</sup> Martin Malia. To the Stalin Mausoleum. *Daedalus*, 198



apparently modern organizations perform in a non-modern fashion. It is a system that rejects modernity, maintains pre-modern ways of doing “everyday things,” and even shows a de-modernizing effect.<sup>194</sup>

Richard Rose characterizes modern society as knowledge-based, rich in information, transparent, and with predictable causal relations. It operates on the basis of laws and “continuing feedback between governors and governed.” Its formal organizations perform their functions in the fashion of a vending machine, so people do not need a “repertoire of tactics” for obtaining a needed result from them.

In contrast, the anti-modern society can be described as “translucent, opaque, uncertain, and irregular,” where feedback messages are repressed or ignored. Survey data reported by Richard Rose reveal that Russians, when confronted with formal organizations failures – such as unpaid wages, lack of police protection, low quality medical care, etc. – resort to repertoires of alternative tactics for getting things done. They rely on private networks of family and friends, home-made products, bribes, and informal connections in the “economy of favors.”

Relations in the “economy of favors” are based on “informal codes” that are enforced more thoroughly than written rules.<sup>195</sup> Alena Ledeneva quotes the popular wisdom saying that “Russia is a country of unread laws and unwritten rules.”<sup>196</sup> The culture of unwritten rules is based on a common knowledge about the

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<sup>194</sup> Richard Rose. How Russians Cope: Living in an Antimodern Society. *East European Constitutional Review*, 8(2), 1999, pp. 68-76.

<sup>195</sup> Alena Ledeneva. *How Russia Really Works. The Informal Practices That Shaped Post-Soviet Politics and Business*. Cornell University Press, 2006.

<sup>196</sup> Alena Ledeneva. Open Secrets and Knowing Smiles. *East European Politics and*

gap between “official discourse” and “the ways in which things are done in practice.” This culture, according to Ledeneva, has the nature of an “open secret” – an oxymoron that adds to other paradoxical formulas describing communist societies (such as “the art of reading between the lines”). Her definition reflects the intended ambiguity and duality of unwritten rules; it underscores “a tacit acceptance that what is known should remain unarticulated.” This principle nurtures “ambivalence about the idea of being honest” and dedicated to declared values and goals. Hence, such system “makes people complicit in their own demoralization and their own corruption.”<sup>197</sup>

The social practices of “beating the system” undermined the Soviet communism, but they also “worked as a boomerang” when the old system collapsed.<sup>198</sup> In Hans van Zon’s viewpoint, the fall of communism became a Pandora’s box for the spread of those anti-modern practices “from population to polity.” That deepened the legitimacy crisis of the post-Soviet regimes, which developed into “a hidden war between citizenry and state” – in the form of failed services and unpaid taxes.<sup>199</sup>

Hans van Zon notes that post-Soviet societies demonstrate a growing division between “inside and outside morals” that is typical of pre-modern societies. Social divide and disintegration – which had started in the late phase of the Soviet system – became astonishingly strong and created “a Hobbesian nightmare.” The

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*Societies*, 25 (4), 2011, pp. 720-736.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Hans van Zon. *The Political Economy of Independent Ukraine*. McMillan, 2000, p. 149.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

new social structure strengthens the ascriptive tendencies of late socialism thus indicating a return to the traditionalist society – except that such structure is not sanctioned by religious beliefs or traditional values.<sup>200</sup>

The overall trend of post-Soviet social change, according to van Zon, is “from a pseudo-modern to an antimodern society.” This change strengthens the pre-modern elements: for instance, social network capital in Ukraine is deemed to have a pre-modern character, and it holds back economic and organizational development.<sup>201</sup>

Hans van Zon summarizes his observations of post-Soviet societies in a hypothesis about “the post-Soviet socio-psychological syndrome.”<sup>202</sup> He posits it as a persistent and self-reproducing set of values, norms, and behavioral patterns. One of them is a cult of power – which is understood as personalist, absolutist, and arbitrary in nature. Such understanding appears to be shared both by the rulers and the ruled. But it is complemented by a perceived alienation between “the people” and “the state,” wherefore the skill of “beating the system” is viewed as a virtue. Another part of that syndrome is an attitude of “learned helplessness” which implies that “the world cannot be changed” and cultivates dependence on the authorities. Compliance with those in power also means that all other abilities are deemed less important; as a consequence, meritocracy is alien to this society, and “intellect is marginalized.” Last but not least, the described syndrome includes “a problematic relationship to truth.”

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>202</sup> Hans van Zon. *Russia's Development Problem: the Cult of Power*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2006, pp. 72-81.

This includes widely spread economic cheating, as well as a general lack of trust in society.

An international policy advisor himself, Van Zon admits that state policies cannot immediately influence the social practices stemming from those beliefs and norms. Although development alternatives are not ruled out, a vicious circle of post-Soviet path dependency appears to be imminent.

## CHAPTER 3.

### DOUBLETHINK: THE MENTAL VIRUS OF PSEUDO-MODERNITY

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#### 3.1. Orwell Still Matters

From a positivist perspective, George Orwell's texts have little relevance to the scientific inquiry about the Soviet system and its legacies: Orwell performed no field research in the Soviet Union. For some, Orwell's concept of "doublethink" is only an abstract "literary metaphor."<sup>203</sup>

But his readers in the Soviet Union<sup>204</sup> were astonished: how could this foreigner, living in a far-away "normal country", describe their life with so much accuracy? How did Orwell know it so well?<sup>205</sup> "Soviet readers admired Orwell;

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<sup>203</sup> This is a quote from a discussant's comment at an academic seminar in comparative politics.

<sup>204</sup> In the terms of Orwellian Newspeak, George Orwell himself was a "non-person" in the Soviet Union until late 1980s. Not only were his books banned, but also his name was not allowed to be mentioned, even in a negative context. However, both the rulers and the ruled were reading him secretly: Orwell's works were published as classified materials for closed circulation among the Communist Party officials (a.k.a. "the inner party") and, at the same time, they were clandestinely disseminated in typewritten copies of *samizdat*. A detailed report on this subject is provided by Arlen Blum (Arlen Blum. *Orwell's Journey to the Land of Bolsheviks*. (In Russian). 2003. Retrieved from URL: [http:// orwell.ru/a\\_life/blum/russian/r\\_papsb](http://orwell.ru/a_life/blum/russian/r_papsb)).

<sup>205</sup> Readers' reactions and comments aggregately rendered in: Victoria Chalikova. *The Unknown Orwell* (in Russian). 1990. Retrieved from URL: [http://orwell.ru/a\\_life/chalikova/russian/](http://orwell.ru/a_life/chalikova/russian/).

they were able to feel the metaphor of ‘a boot stamping on a human face – forever’ in its vivid entirety,” recalls a Russian essayist.<sup>206</sup>

Victoria Chalikova, Russia’s leading scholar of Orwell, believed that his biggest discovery as an artist concerned the changing character of power in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was the first time when the rulers came “from the masses,” when they attempted to protect their power collectively, like a mafia or a clique, and when they resorted to a calculated algorithm in order to control society – by controlling the people’s thoughts, memory, and speech.<sup>207</sup> A central question for Orwell is “whether there is any such thing as ‘truth’” – because truth in the 20<sup>th</sup> century becomes “mobile,” it is proven “by the consensus of the millions,” and there is “no longer any awareness of the discrepancy between truth and falsehood.”<sup>208</sup>

Orwell’s characters discuss the “mutability of the past.” They explain that “past events have no objective existence [...] Since the Party is in full control of all records and in equally full control of the minds of its members, it follows that the past is whatever the Party chooses it to be.”<sup>209</sup>

That narrative accurately reflected the Soviet reality -- suffice it to compare the above quote with the following passage from George Kennan’s famous article, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct:”

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<sup>206</sup> Gennady Gerasimov. *Before and After 1984: Big Brother With Us*. 2003. (In Russian). Retrieved from URL: [http://orwell.ru/a\\_life/gerasimov/russian/r\\_gg](http://orwell.ru/a_life/gerasimov/russian/r_gg)

<sup>207</sup> Chalikova, *ibid*.

<sup>208</sup> Erich Fromm. Afterword to “Nineteen eighty-four.” Signet Classics, 1977, pp. 313-326.

<sup>209</sup> George Orwell. “Nineteen Eighty-Four,” Part 2, Chapter 9.

“Truth is not a constant but is actually created, for all intents and purposes, by the Soviet leaders themselves. It may vary from week to week, from month to month. It is nothing absolute and immutable -- nothing which flows from objective reality. It is only the most recent manifestation of the wisdom of those in whom the ultimate wisdom is supposed to reside, because they represent the logic of history.”<sup>210</sup>

Orwell’s text further explains that, in order to accept the Party’s “mutable truth,” a person would need, most of all, “the training of memory” with the help of a “mental technique” named *doublethink*:

“*Doublethink* means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one’s mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them [...] To tell deliberate lies while genuinely believing in them, to forget any fact that has become inconvenient [...] To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them [...] and above all, to apply the same process to the process itself – that was the ultimate subtlety; consciously to induce unconsciousness, and then, once again, to become unconscious of the act of hypnosis you had just performed. Even to understand the word ‘doublethink’ involved the use of doublethink.”<sup>211</sup>

Erich Fromm notes that as the result of such manipulation of the mind, “the person is no longer saying the opposite of what he thinks, but he thinks the opposite of what is true.”<sup>212</sup> We are also reminded that doublethink importantly differs from cognitive dissonance. The latter term denotes “the perception of incompatibility between two cognitions”, or “the uncomfortable tension that comes from holding two

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<sup>210</sup> George Kennan. The Sources of Soviet Conduct. *Foreign Affairs*, 25(4), 1947, pt 2.

<sup>211</sup> George Orwell. “Nineteen Eighty-Four,” Part 1, Chapter 3; Part 2, Chapter 9.

<sup>212</sup> Erich Fromm, *ibid.*, p. 324.

conflicting thoughts at the same time,” whereas doublethink describes the act of “simultaneously accepting two mutually contradictory beliefs as correct.”<sup>213</sup> As Robert Conquest remarked, doublethink was “the condition of life” in the Soviet state.<sup>214</sup>

Ronald Hingley’s analysis indicates that the concept of doublethink is relevant for understanding the Soviet trait of “camouflage and deception.” Hingley raises the question whether “the *vranyo* artist” can simultaneously “believe and not believe the creative fictions that he disseminates.” For Hingley, the likely answer was in Dostoyevsky’s description of “the take-off moment” – when “one begins to believe in oneself halfway through a story.” In Hingley’s view, a fantasy-monger “oscillates” between wholeheartedly believing in what he is saying at one moment, and not believing at another moment.<sup>215</sup>

Hingley also pointed out that the nature of belief was “a particularly elusive general problem,” and that too little was known about “what happens to a man’s brain when he is compelled year in and year out to repeat statements which he may know or suspect to be untrue.” He assumed that a lifelong addiction to *vranyo* may produce a significant “dislocation in the brain,” perhaps in the form of “controlled schizophrenia whereby private thoughts and official mendacity are, so to

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<sup>213</sup> Tom McArthur (ed.). *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*. Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 321.

That point is also developed by Gail Sheehy in her biographic study of Mikhail Gorbachev (*The Man Who Changed the World*, 1991).

<sup>214</sup> Robert Conquest. Foreword to: Luba Brezhneva. *The World I Left Behind. Pieces of a Past*. Random House, 1995.

<sup>215</sup> Ronald Hingley, *ibid.*, p. 97-98.



speaking, confined in separate compartments of the brain.”<sup>216</sup> As another important point, he noted that *vranyo* was a “two-way process” in which “the relations between purveyor and recipient are of the essence.”<sup>217</sup>

The concept of doublethink is directly linked to Hanna Arendt’s claim that totalitarian ideologies were focused on the transformation of human nature rather than the outside world. Alena Ledeneva further extends that link to the writings of Alexander Zinoviev who portrayed the *Homo Sovieticus* as a product of such transformation, and to the empirical evidence from Yuri Levada about the traits of *Homo Post-Sovieticus* where doublethink remains a perpetuating legacy.<sup>218</sup>

Levada described the Soviet Man as “Deceptive Man” -- an incarnation of “doublethink, Russian style,” a person “in constant need of self-deception.” While praising George Orwell for introducing the “fruitful term” of doublethink into the language of science and politics, Levada also maintained that Orwell’s frame was “deliberately oversimplified for the sake of ‘purity’ of the thought experiment.” It assumed that the “bosses” were cynically rational in manipulating the submissive “lower orders” -- but in reality such distinction did not exist. Levada argues that “the ‘upper classes’ inevitably live by the same rules of deceptive doublethink that are typical of their inferiors,” and that they self-deceptively “confuse desire with reality” in the same manner. He concludes that

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid., pp. 98-99.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., pp. 100-101.

<sup>218</sup> Alena Ledeneva, *ibid.*

post-Soviet Russia reveals “even more profound examples of doublethink,” and so far “neither society, nor its leaders have succeeded in breaking out of the circle.”<sup>219</sup>

Thus, it should not be surprising that references to Orwell remain abundant in the post-Soviet political discourse. In one notable example, an activist of Ukraine’s Orange Revolution was recalling:

”In early 2004, I and my like-minded friends were driven by personal hatred for the [President Leonid] Kuchma regime. We were reading Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, thinking about Ukraine, and we wanted a revolution.”<sup>220</sup>

Likewise, anti-Putin protesters in Moscow came out for the rally on 12 June 2012 with mocking quotes from Orwell on their posters: “War is Peace. Freedom is Slavery. Ignorance is Strength.”<sup>221</sup>

A Russian political essayist, Kim Satarin, suggests that the phenomenon of doublethink is not necessarily a product of the totalitarian suppression of dissent, which is why it can also be found in a democratic environment. Such form of doublethink can be nourished by contradictions between people’s private attitudes and habits, on the one hand, and the expectations of their public roles, on the other.

In post-Soviet Russia, according to Satarin, a major source of doublethink is the country’s “catch-up civilization path” – because it produced a mix of mindsets and behavior models, some predominantly archaic, others more inherent

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid., pp. 66-67.

<sup>220</sup> Oleksiy Tolkachov. The Unknown Stories of the Maidan (in Ukrainian). *Ukrainska Pravda*, November 20, 2009.

<sup>221</sup> *Novaia Gazeta*, June 13, 2012 (in Russian), URL: <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/politics/53030.html>

to the modern industrial society. They are based on different worldviews, different patterns of rationality and identity, and different understanding of such concepts as power, law, privacy, and individual rights. Therefore, “a person with a mixed structure of consciousness and surrounded by likewise ‘mottled’ individuals will inevitably demonstrate doublethink.”<sup>222</sup>

A similar point is made by a contemporary philosopher who interprets the phenomenon of Russian doublethink as “a historical and cultural derivative of the destabilizing duality of the Russian society.” He quotes Nikolai Berdyaev explaining those roots of doublethink:

“The conservatism and stagnancy of our base character became connected with our inclination towards novelties and the latest European trends, which, however, were never truly internalized.”<sup>223</sup>

Kim Satarin further reflects that the archaic type of conscience -- which was cultivated under totalitarianism – tends to deify the supreme ruler as a “magic” protecting force. For this type of conscience, free elections create a sense of psychological absence of the supreme power – which that conscience rejects as uncomfortable and unacceptable. Hence, a big part of Russian voters do not take the democratic procedure seriously – they perceive it as a toy, rather than a tool. This determines an imitative character of politics: there are civic procedures in absence of

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<sup>222</sup> Kim Satarin. Doublethink (in Russian). *Samizdat Journal*, 2007. URL: [http://samlib.ru/s/satarin\\_k\\_k/dvoemysl.shtml](http://samlib.ru/s/satarin_k_k/dvoemysl.shtml)

<sup>223</sup> Aleksandr Khlopin. Fenomen dvoemyslia: Zapad i Rossia (“The Doublethink Phenomenon: The West and Russia”). *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost*, 1994 (3), pp. 49-60.

citizens. And conscientious imitation results in doublethink again – only this time, it is not imposed from above, but rather is prompted “by one’s own invalidity.”

In Satarin’s estimate, that type of voters is prevalent in contemporary Russia, although there is a civic-minded minority as well. It is still an open question whether that minority will be enough to realign Russia’s development with the path of political modernity.

In Ukraine, observers note similarly irrational trends of voting behavior. “Our post-Soviet society remains locked in stereotypes that are harder to break than chains and shackles,” remarks a Ukrainian political commentator. He finds that mass consciousness is dominated by “resilient myths” where “interpretations are more important than facts”. As he further points out:

“Without changing the myths, we cannot change the reality. [Thus,] lies are the truth, and peace is war: that formula works very well in our part of “Eurasia.”<sup>224</sup>

Like many others, this expert feels that elections cannot change the quality of Ukraine’s politics because strong protest attitudes do not get reflected in election outcomes: “when people decide to vote, they are guided by irrational motivations.” He concludes that such a trend continuously “demonstrates premises with no results.”

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<sup>224</sup> Yuri Butusov. *Six Leading Myths About the Elections of 2012* (in Russian).

URL: [http://censor.net.ua/resonance/221801/shest\\_glavnyh\\_mifov\\_vyborov2012](http://censor.net.ua/resonance/221801/shest_glavnyh_mifov_vyborov2012)

### **3.2. Doublethink: the Mental Software of the “Soviet Mind”**

#### ***The “Dual consciousness” of communist ideocracy***

The Soviet system was based on ideocratic rule; its two most distinctive and permeating characteristics were discipline and ideological control. The latter was rooted in the exercise of doublethink as a “positive” way of domination – teaching the Soviet people to “love the Big Brother.”<sup>225</sup>

Andrzej Walicki discusses two notable features of the collective mind of Soviet functionaries. One is known as “the party mystique” -- the belief in the party’s “collective infallibility” and, consequently, a functionary’s absolute loyalty to its pronouncements. Leon Trotsky was one of the first to formulate this principle by saying, “The party in the last analysis is always right because the party is the only historical instrument given to the proletariat to resolve its fundamental tasks... it is impossible to be right against the party, one can be right only with the party and through the party.”<sup>226</sup> Perhaps, the most famous articulation of this principle belongs to Yuri Piatakov, a prominent figure in the Communist Party leadership of the 1920s, who was reported saying that if the party called something black that actually was white, he would then consider it black, too – “since outside the party, outside accord with it, there is no life for me.”<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Andrzej Walicki. *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom. The Rise and Fall of the Communist Utopia*. Stanford University Press, 1995, p. 454.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., p. 455.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., p. 461.

The faith in the infallibility of the Party was grounded morally and logically. It assumed that the Party's aims were sanctified by the "Dialectic of History" since it claimed to be the "vanguard of the proletariat" – the embodiment of "the active principle in History." For those who devoutly believed in that, communist party membership equated to "being one of the select."<sup>228</sup>

Related to the perception of "the party mystique" was the psychic mechanism that Andrzej Walicki calls "dual consciousness." A vivid example of it was revealed during the "show trials" of the 1930s when famous Bolshevik leaders were falsely confessing to be guilty of "heinous crimes" against the country. Walicki resorts to Arthur Koestler's analysis of their "mental captivity" showing how an old Bolshevik uses "Marxist dialectic" to persuade himself that he was "objectively guilty" despite his "subjective" innocence on the specific charges.<sup>229</sup>

The historical prototype of that character, Nikolai Bukharin, made a "remarkably self-conscious" attempt to explain such conduct in his confession at the trial.<sup>230</sup> He spoke of the "dual psychology" of opposition-minded Bolsheviks that was akin to the Hegelian inwardly split "unhappy consciousness" (*unglückliche Bewußtsein*). They were torn between their factional differences with Stalin and the

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<sup>228</sup> Arthur Koestler in "The God That Failed" (1949). He also noted, however, that "the chosen status was blended with an atmosphere of mutual distrust and constant exposure to collective supervision. Not only the thinking, but also the vocabulary of party members were strictly controlled." (In rendering by Andrzej Walicki, *ibid.*, p. 473).

<sup>229</sup> Arthur Koestler. "Darkness At Noon," 1940. The novel's protagonist, Nicholas Rubashov, was modeled on Nikolai Bukharin; Koestler's account of the events and characters is recognized as "well founded on the facts." (Walicki, *ibid.*, pp. 456-458).

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 462-465.

realization that by fighting against him, they were siding with class enemies of the communist revolution. In Andrzej Walicki's terms, people like Bukharin "were seeing Stalin as a monster, on the one hand, and yet regarding him as the legitimate incarnation of the party and its socialist cause."<sup>231</sup> He describes this state of mind as "paradigmatic" of the totalitarian communist mentality.

It may be argued that "unhappy consciousness" was a kind of "secular theodicy" under heavy ideocratic pressure, whereas Orwellian doublethink was a "voluntary accommodation to the mendacity of a secular theocracy."<sup>232</sup> Andrzej Walicki makes that distinction to show that "Communist true believers" suffered a different tragedy than "victims of ideological oppression" such as Soviet intellectuals. But Walicki also admits that the difference is rather blurred. Indeed, Winston Smith's love of the Big Brother cannot be called a truly voluntary act. It will further be argued that "true believers" and "victims" in the Soviet historical experience often blended together.

A Soviet Samizdat writer and human rights activist, Valentin Turchin, argued that the supreme form of totalitarian enslavement was not by means of terror, but by making individuals "accept the system as an alleged necessity that cannot possibly be changed." He described it as "subjecting people's minds to an ideological operation that changes their identity and paralyzes their will to resist."<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid., p. 463.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., p. 478.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid. p. 478-479.

That definition, written in the early 1970s, resonates with remarkable admissions now made by former Soviet retirees as they look back into those times. A descendant of enthusiastic Jewish settlers that came to the Siberian Birobidzhan in the 1930s<sup>234</sup> recalls that his parents had always perceived Stalin's repression as "a force of nature that takes its inevitable toll." For them, arrests and disappearance of neighbors were "a part of life, like weddings and funerals... They lived in fear, but they did not resist; they did not understand why [this was done], but they took it with hardly any complaint."<sup>235</sup>

Turchin described the late Soviet phase (USSR under Brezhnev) as "stationary totalitarianism" when the system was perceived as "the only game in town," and attitudes of "social adaptation" developed into a comprehensive culture of doublethink. Another dissident intellectual of that time defined the Soviet doublethink as "submission to the 'socio-ideological mannequin' installed in everybody's mind" which required "repudiating one's genuine identity."<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Birobidzhan was founded in 1931 and became the capital of the Jewish Autonomous Region, one of Stalin's projects of ethnic resettlement. Unlike his mass deportation projects of the 1940s, this one was initially based on government-encouraged voluntary resettlement by individual families, mostly from Ukraine and Belarus.

<sup>235</sup> This comment was made by Mikhail Dobkin, a modern-day resident of Birobidzhan (GEO Magazine, No. 113, August 2007. URL: <http://www.geo.ru/node/41556?page=1#article-body>). Dobkin – a retired Soviet prosecutor -- is further quoted as saying: "Hitler buried Jews in graves, while Stalin surgically removed the Jewish brains and forced them to go on living." In Dobkin's opinion, Birobidzhan was one of the places where the attempt to mold "the New Soviet Man" had been successfully accomplished.

<sup>236</sup> Andrzej Walicki, *ibid.*, p. 483.



Importantly, this separation with “one’s genuine self” existed in different degrees and varied from one individual to another. The minimum degree was characterized as “ideological infantilism.” Its opposite was cynicism – the maximum degree of inner separation from externally accepted rules. Cynics were noted to serve the official ideology even more effectively than “infantile” believers. But even cynics – despite their sense of having “inner freedom” -- were “correcting themselves in accordance with the reflexes elaborated in the ‘ideological mannequin’.”<sup>237</sup>

It is worth noting that the younger generation of Communist Party functionaries – especially the *apparatchiks* of the Young Communist League (the Comsomol) – consistently exhibited that trait. That should not be surprising because, in comparison with any other social group, they were better informed and less constrained by illusions or moral scruple.<sup>238</sup> By the same token, their particular “more separated” version of adaptation made this group better prepared to excel in post-Soviet realities: they were perfectly trained to follow “the trend.”<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Gorbachev’s glasnost opened an avalanche of public exposures on that subject. A notable example is the works of the writer Yuri Poliakov who masterfully described the duplicity, immorality, and absurdity of career-mongering apparatchiks in his novellas, “*Extraordinary Incident On a District Scale*” (1985) and “*Apofegei*” (1989): they made a bomb-shell effect at that time.

<sup>239</sup> This point is also well illustrated by the passage in Yuri Poliakov’s novel “*I Conceived an Escape*” (1999) where a newly-made post-Soviet “oligarch” cynically remarks: “Any normal person with brains could have made a fortune in the recent years. Money was piled under your feet. You only had to bend down slightly quicker than others or at least just as quickly. But you did not even bend down! So you are

Another peculiar mental technique of adaption to totalitarian ideocracy was described by Czeslaw Milosz as Ketman.<sup>240</sup> Andrzej Walicki interpreted Milosz's famous novel as emphasizing creative defense and passive resistance, rather than surrender to ideocratic mental captivity.<sup>241</sup> In his opinion, "national Ketman" as a form of "conscious mass play" ultimately helped to deligitimize Marxism in the Polish society sooner and more completely than in Russia where communist indoctrination had been deeper and longer.

In Walicki's conclusion, different forms of accommodating "dual consciousness" developed by the Soviet people in response to ideocratic tyranny defeated the ultimate goal of communist indoctrination: "the New Man of the communist utopia did not appear."<sup>242</sup> But the efforts to create the New Man undoubtedly left their mutilating effects. As Alexander Solzhenitsyn once remarked, in the Soviet society "doublethink had been worked to perfection and became a permanent part of our lives."<sup>243</sup>

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either a fool, or a sluggard. What had you been doing? Worrying for the nation? Attending political rallies?" (translated from Russian).

<sup>240</sup> Czeslaw Milosz. *The Captive Mind* (1953).

<sup>241</sup> Andrzej Walicki, *ibid.*, pp. 489-492.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 494.

<sup>243</sup> Quoted from *ibid.*, p. 485.

### *Forging of the New Soviet Man*

In Lenin's view, the best proof of Marxism's difference from old socialist utopias was the understanding that the communist society would not be built out of abstract "virtuous people specially cultivated in greenhouses." On the contrary, as he put it, communism could only be built with "the mass human material raised in bourgeois environment" and inevitably poisoned by "bloody, dirty, rapacious, mercantile capitalism."<sup>244</sup> Hence, the program of the Russian Communist Party written by Nikolai Bukharin in 1918 prescribed that the new communist man should be "manufactured" by means of "proletarian coercion in all its forms, beginning with the firing squad."<sup>245</sup>

The ultimate goal and challenge of such "manufacturing" was well explained in Evgeny Zamiatin's famous formula when he wrote that the individual and the communist state were like two weights on a pair of scales – a gram for "I" and a ton for "We." Then "the natural path from nothingness to greatness is to forget that you are a gram and to feel instead that you are a millionth part of a ton" – but the "grams" themselves would have to wish to be merged into the "ton."<sup>246</sup> No wonder then that the Soviet vocabulary of the 1930s referred to that process as the "forging" of the New Man.

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<sup>244</sup> V.I.Lenin. *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy* (Complete Works), vol. 37, p. 409 (translated from Russian).

<sup>245</sup> Quoted from: Mikhail Heller. *Cogs in the Wheel. The Formation of Soviet Man*. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1988.

<sup>246</sup> Yevgeny Zamiatin. "We." Quoted from *ibid.*, p. 6.

As Mikhail Heller demonstrates in his thorough study, the main tools of this “forging” had been accurately described by Zamiatin and Orwell. They included fear, hatred of the designated enemy, affection for the supreme ruler, power over memory and personal life, controlled poverty, and “Newspeak.”<sup>247</sup> Zamiatin’s inventory of those tools additionally includes literature and arts.

Fear was inflicted not only by arrests and executions – those were only “the sharpest” out of many tools in the arsenal. It was also produced by a coercive and tightening system of restrictions and bans that concerned all spheres of life, from housing and domestic travel to employment and marriage.<sup>248</sup>

A keen British journalist observed in 1930 that 90% of Soviet population were disillusioned, discontent, and driven by anxiety and fear. But the other 10% were “filled with an enthusiasm, unknown in any other group of people save perhaps the National Socialists of Germany, the Fascist and the Salvation Army. [...] Most of the active minority are young in age and young in spirit. Many of them [...] have no conception of life in a capitalist country. Having passed through the Communist training grounds of the Pioneers (the Communist Boy Scouts) and the Komsomol (the League of Communist Youth), they have had Leninism stamped upon them and have been educated to believe in the inevitability of the world revolution.”<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Mikhail Heller. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 91-102.

<sup>249</sup> Gareth Jones. The Two Russias: Rulers and Ruled. Below the Surface. *The Times* (London), October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1930. URL: [http://www.garethjones.org/soviet\\_articles/soviet\\_articles.htm](http://www.garethjones.org/soviet_articles/soviet_articles.htm)

The school, the media, literature and films – all of this together made up one integral system of propaganda (a.k.a. “communist upbringing”) that was “penetrating into every house and every mind.”<sup>250</sup>

More than anything else, that system of indoctrination cultivated duplicity in various forms – from dual consciousness and doublethink to prevarication and blunt hypocrisy. As an example, during the collectivization famine of 1932, when every day one could see swollen bodies of starved and dying people on the streets, a teacher was telling a class of hungry kids about the advantages of socialism and kept saying: “Children, you are NOT hungry!”<sup>251</sup>

Lev Kopelev -- subsequently a writer and a human rights activist -- was an ardent communist believer at that time, one of those youths with “Leninism stamped upon him”. In 1932, he was assigned to enforce farm collectivization – which meant to confiscate food from starving villagers. Kopelev’s memoirs are a rarely honest self-study, a kind of retrospective autopsy of “a true believer.” He recalls how his fanatic faith in the righteousness of the goal made him blind and deaf to the villagers’ despair; he was convincing himself that all was being done “for their own good” and better future:

“We were fanatical novitiates of the omni-salvatory ideals of communism. So when we saw that our noble and kind ideas were used to justify ignominious and cruel

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<sup>250</sup> Victor Krasin. The Russian Revolution. *Ezhednevnyi Zhurnal*, January 26, 2010. (in Russian).

URL: <http://www.ej.ru/?a=note&id=9805>

<sup>251</sup> Reminiscences of Isaac Khalatnikov, subsequently a Soviet nuclear physicist. (Халатников И.М. Кентавр, Дау и другие. - М.: Физматлит, 2007. - 192 с.).

deeds, and when we had to take part in those deeds ourselves, we most of all feared to become confused, to admit doubts and apostasy, we feared to lose our unmitigated faith.”<sup>252</sup>

Contemporary historians explore the field of “Soviet subjectivity” in attempts to examine “the degree to which the interior life of the individual citizen was dominated by the regime’s ideology.” Their findings confirm Zamiatin’s metaphor about “grams” wanting to be merged into a “ton.” For many, such immersion was a means of survival. They forced themselves “to silence their doubts and fears” and tried “not to think or feel outside the terms defined by the official public discourse.”<sup>253</sup> Such “Sovietization of the mind” was universal. As a Soviet writer remarked, “Stalinism entered into all of us.”<sup>254</sup>

Official censorship strictly controlled writers and artists, but their inner control – the so-called self-censorship – was even stricter. It worked like a spelled circle besetting a writer inside a chain of mandatory myths, permitted characters, and approved symbols. “No Soviet writer who wishes to be published in his own country can escape from that circle,” remarked Mikhail Heller.<sup>255</sup> One aspiring writer explained that point to Sergei Dovlatov as an act of balancing: “A

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<sup>252</sup> Lev Kopelev. *To be Preserved Forever*. Part 1, Chapter 7 (translated from Russian).

<sup>253</sup> Orlando Figes. *The Whisperers*. p. xxxiv – xxxv.

<sup>254</sup> Mikhail Gefter, quoted in *ibid.*, p. xxxii.

<sup>255</sup> Heller, *Ibid.*, p. 223.

### Exhibit 1.3.1: Forging the “New Soviet Man”



“Grandpa Lenin” in a Soviet pre-school dance class (top).  
Source: *A Day in the Life of the Soviet Union*, Collins Publishers, 1987 (photo by Dilip Mehta).



An image of Lenin in his childhood (as Volodia Ulianov) accompanied elementary school students as the official emblem of the pre-pioneer upbringing – as in this Soviet poster (Source: Wikimedia Commons).

litterateur must get published, but not to the detriment of his talent. There is a slot between clean conscience and ignobility. One must slip through that slot.”<sup>256</sup>

Valeria Novodvorskaia, an essayist who was a prisoner of conscience in Brezhnev’s times, summarizes:

“The Soviet literature, stifled and dehydrated by the “red heat,” perfectly mastered the pentameters and trochees of doublethink. Everyone had to go through those grindstones – from Mikhail Bulgakov to Ilya Erenburg. Very few were able to stay clean from the bloody dirt of Soviet falsehood... and some became unsurpassed in their duplicity.”<sup>257</sup>

Heller also emphasized that Soviet indoctrination had a strong irrational component; it was propped by belief in miracle and myth. The teaching’s promises were impossible to achieve, in everyday small matters as well as in the grand dimension. Hence, faith in miraculous victories and achievements against all odds, due to the power of will, ingenuity and wisdom, was called to rescue. It is reflected in propaganda messages, in every Soviet leader’s statements, and in such developments as the Stakhanovite movement or the career success of Trofim Lysenko.

The same was true about Soviet myths. “A collection of myths creates a magic ring around a Soviet person, blocking all the exits to the outside world,” observed Heller.<sup>258</sup> That ring was made up by the grand myths such as “the unity of the party and the people,” the “all-people state,” the inevitability of

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<sup>256</sup> Sergei Dovlatov. *The Craft*. Part One.

<sup>257</sup> Valeria Novodvorskaia. *The New Times*, January 30, 2012 (in Russian).

URL: <http://newtimes.ru/articles/detail/49059/>

<sup>258</sup> Heller, *ibid.*, p.192.



communism etc. Heller emphatically agreed with Leszek Kolakowski who had noted that the Soviet state was combating religion not because of its atheistic principles, but because of its totalitarian nature: it did not tolerate competing mythologies.

Soviet propaganda generated myths about its heroes and strongly relied on them. Myth was substituting and ousting true reality. Examples are abundant. The story of Pavlik Morozov, a Young Pioneer who allegedly exposed “class enemies” in his own family and was brutally killed by them in 1932, was a major heroic narrative of Soviet history textbooks for more than fifty years. When the writer Yuri Druzhnikov investigated the facts on his own, he discovered that the majority of them were false. Most remarkably, the villagers he interviewed -- including even the dead hero’s own mother -- while recollecting facts that differed from the official version, would also add: “but the correct story is the one in books.”

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Another and no less striking example of myth replacing reality is rendered by Semion Gluzman, a psychiatrist who was imprisoned in Brezhnev’s times for human rights activism. While in prison, he learned the story of a man who had been serving a long sentence for collaborating with the Nazis during World War II in Krasnodon – the city made famous by the celebrated Soviet novel “Young Guard” which describes a heroic group of teenagers who took part in underground resistance movement. That old convict once wrote a letter to the USSR Prosecutor General asking to review and drop some of his charges because they had been based on false facts. Weeks later, a special investigation officer came from Moscow – and told that

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<sup>259</sup> Yuri Druzhnikov. *Informer 001: The Myth of Pavlik Morozov*. 1988.

man: “Your petition was rejected because we cannot question the validity of the great novel that serves to educate millions of our young people.”<sup>260</sup>

A tool of major importance in forging the New Soviet Man was language – as reflected in the Orwellian Newspeak. Heller notes that language was “the most important and the most powerful weapon in the hands of a state that decided to transform the human beings.”<sup>261</sup> In the new “Soviet language” the word “loses its generally accepted meaning and becomes an empty shell which the supreme authority fills” as desired. The word “conceals reality with an illusion” and also creates a “coded reality.” According to Heller, “the Soviet language is a code in which the signs are determined by the supreme authority,” and individuals are “admitted to the secrets of the code” in varying degrees, depending on their position in the social hierarchy.<sup>262</sup>

The linguist Grigory Vinokur attempted to propose improvements to the “revolutionary phraseology” of the 1920s by making it more rational and meaningful. He noted that communist slogans were turning into “verbal clichés” devoid of real content. He was warning about “the danger of the effect of empty phrases on people’s minds” -- because one can think in images or in words, but not in clichés. Thinking in clichés was bound to be “senseless.”<sup>263</sup> Similar ideas and

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<sup>260</sup> Semion Gluzman. In Memory Of Noble Lies. *Telekritika* (a Ukrainian weekly). June 1, 2006.

<sup>261</sup> Heller, *ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>263</sup> Quoted from *ibid.*, pp. 234-236.

observations were discussed by George Orwell,<sup>264</sup> Victor Klemperer,<sup>265</sup> and Hannah Arendt.<sup>266</sup> Czeslaw Milosz addressed the same issue in his concept of “logocracy.”<sup>267</sup> The Soviet system produced the most comprehensive historical experience of cliché-based logocracy. Among its other effects, this experience trained the Soviet people “to read between the lines” – which often meant to interpret the truth as the opposite to what is officially claimed.<sup>268</sup>

Heller, Sinyavsky, Krasin, Zinoviev and many other Soviet intellectuals agreed that the decades of molding the “New Soviet Man” did produce a new breed of people. Alexander Zinoviev denoted it as the “Homo Sovieticus.” He characterized that person as “ideologically enslaved”<sup>269</sup> and “a self-satisfied slave” who considers himself “the freest man there is.”<sup>270</sup> Victor Krasin recalls how dissidents like himself mistakenly believed that the “working masses” obediently followed Soviet rituals such as elections and parades “out of fear” – but they were

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<sup>264</sup> George Orwell. *Politics and the English Language*, 1946.

<sup>265</sup> Victor Klemperer. *LTI (A Linguist’s Diaries)*. Moscow, 1998 (in Russian).

<sup>266</sup> Hannah Arendt. *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 1963.

<sup>267</sup> As discussed by Mikhail Heller, *ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>268</sup> Numerous examples of that are discussed by Mikhail Heller (*ibid.*) and also by Andrei Sinyavsky in his *“Soviet Civilization: A Cultural History”* (1988). Sinyavsky notes that such habit to black-and-white thinking together with distrust to official statements has caused errors – for instance, in the Soviet people’s idealization of “life in the West” (p. 211). That point is masterfully expressed by Sergei Dovlatov in this famous passage: “When we find out that America is not a paradise, that would be our biggest discovery[... ] But we had naively thought that whatever was bad in the Soviet Union, would have to be wonderful in America. [...] For us, America was the idea of paradise, because paradise is what we are deprived of.” (Dovlatov. *The Craft*).

<sup>269</sup> Krasin, *ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> Sinyavsky, *ibid.*, p. 146.

wrong. “The masses” showed little sympathy for the dissidents who took protest action in defense of human rights.

Mikhail Heller compares the formation of the Soviet Man with the finale of Orwell’s famous novel: the machine of the state achieves complete victory, and the individual is turned into a cog in the machine. In the Soviet Union, he concludes, the process of turning human beings into cogs lasted for more than seventy years. The most important outcome of that process, according to Heller, is expressed in Alexander Zinoviev’s words: “The Soviet society is passive and regimented. Our people became resigned. They are indifferent.”<sup>271</sup> Likewise, the writer Anatoly Pristavkin, when interviewed by the American scholar Gail Sheehy, described his compatriots saying: “Indifference is their chief characteristic.”<sup>272</sup>

Gail Sheehy observed that Soviets did not think in the same way as Westerners. For a Western-educated thinker, perceived cognitive dissonance causes psychological discomfort and motivates an effort to resolve or reduce the contradiction. But Soviets are “trained to think on two levels,” notes Sheehy; “at the first level they believe they are sincere, but at the level of heart they realize they are lying.”<sup>273</sup> She quotes Valentin Yumashev, a professional journalist who in post-Soviet times became a political and business tycoon, explaining that form of adaptation:

“The first level is protective. You believe that you mean well and cast your actions in the name of romantic ideals. At a deeper level, the level of heart, you understand that it’s a trade-off or betrayal [...] Truth is mixed with lies, trade-offs with attempts to

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<sup>271</sup> Heller, *ibid.*, p. 259-261.

<sup>272</sup> Gail Sheehy. *The Man Who Changed the World*. HarperCollins, 1990, p. 146.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144-145.

justify them. But you can't let yourself think at that level, except in rare moments, or people would have gone crazy years ago from living in the ocean of lies.”<sup>274</sup>

Thus, concludes Sheehy, the class of Soviet rulers has cultivated traits of chameleons “accustomed to acting many parts and drifting to change views in a matter of minutes,” while the class of the ruled are in a condition “of the walking dead”: they could never speak the truth, so they are not even able “to think the truth.” Therefore, “the masses have accumulated a perverse talent for not seeing what they see, for not believing their eyes, as though they had been rewired into a single, nerve-connected, social organism.”<sup>275</sup>

### ***The Philistine Within the Bolshevik***

Carl Marx wrongly assumed that “proletarian” was a stable social identification – because “proletarians, no matter whether they are victorious or oppressed, never want to remain proletarians.”<sup>276</sup> In other words, they want to acquire property. The thoughtful Russian commentator making that point today feels that this was a fundamental mistake of Marxist theory and perhaps an underlying cause of the Soviet system failure.

Soviet ideology waged a war against “petty-bourgeois acquisitive instincts.” In part, it used the Russian word “*meshchanstvo*” as a label to condemn

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>275</sup> Gail Sheehy, *ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>276</sup> *Vosstanie meshchan* (“Philistines’ rebellion”). *Novaya Gazeta*, July 12, 2011.

such behavior.<sup>277</sup> The word is normatively translated into English as “philistinism,” although perhaps a more accurate equivalent in the American English would be “babbitry.”

Leon Trotsky foresaw the dangerous consequences of “the Bolshevik finding the philistine within.”<sup>278</sup> He spoke about the “dual character” of the Soviet state, which was socialist because it abolished private property, but was still using, as Lenin himself had recognized, “the bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie.” That meant using “the bourgeois norms of distribution” and “the capitalist measure of value” which had “to serve socialist aims.” In this theoretical contradiction (that could “horrify the dogmatists and scholastics”) Trotsky saw the cause of “the fundamental contradiction between Bolshevik program and Soviet reality.” He observed that the state was getting more despotic, while its bureaucracy was rising as the new privileged class.<sup>279</sup>

Yegor Gaidar reasonably points out that Trotsky’s “perceptive sociological analysis” anticipated the theory of the New Class which Milovan Djilas

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<sup>277</sup> A little episode in that long struggle against “acquisitive philistinism” is brightly described in Luba Brezhneva’s memoirs: “Soon after the war Victoriya [Leonid Brezhnev’s spouse] decided that a general’s wife should have a better wardrobe, and threw a royal tantrum. Without saying a word, Leonid calmly scooped up all her dresses and shoes, found a hatchet, and chopped everything into small pieces. To Leonid, the clothing symbolized a vulgar, bourgeois acquisitiveness he found repugnant, and he swung the hatchet as though each blow were bringing down an enemy soldier. Tears were running down his cheeks.” (Luba Brezhneva. *The World I Left Behind*. Random House, 1995, pp. 314-315).

<sup>278</sup> Leon Trotsky. *My Life: An Essay in Autobiography*. Quoted from: Yegor Gaidar. *State and Evolution*. University of Washington Press, 2003, p. 65.

<sup>279</sup> Leon Trotsky. *The Revolution Betrayed. What is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Coming?* (1937). Labor Publications, 1991, pp. 45-55.

elaborated decades later. Trotsky also predicted that increasing privileges would not satisfy the appetite of the bureaucracy (a.k.a. the nomenklatura). There would come a day when the nomenklatura would want to turn from “directors” of state-owned assets into their “shareholders.” As Gaidar noted, “unlike many of Trotsky’s other prophecies,” this one actually came true.<sup>280</sup>

According to Gaidar, the collapse of the Soviet system inevitably followed from the “rigid framework of logic” expressed in the two Marxist formulas: 1) communism abolishes private property; 2) the state, in essence, is owned by the bureaucracy. For Gaidar, those two premises shaped the logical, sociological, and psychological “frame of the grand but doomed house that Lenin built.”<sup>281</sup> Its rise and fall, according to Gaidar, was a three-step process: a) all private property was turned into state property; b) state property turned into the collective property of the bureaucracy; c) bureaucrats sought to become its private owners.<sup>282</sup> In Gaidar’s apt metaphor, “the nomenklatura broke out of its socialist framework like a chick pecking out of its shell.”<sup>283</sup>

Initially, the anti-proprietary component of the communist ideology efficiently restrained the bureaucrats’ acquisitive instincts. But that should not be credited to Stalin’s personality alone, notes Gaidar. Rather, the nomenklatura’s behavior in the 1920s and 1930s was driven by a complex mix of fear, faith, and self-

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<sup>280</sup> Yegor Gaidar, *ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>281</sup> Gaidar, *ibid.*, p.63.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, p.62. Gaidar names this three-step formula “the shortest but fundamentally complete course of the CPSU history.”

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

preservation instinct. The latter was telling them that their power was not entirely secure. Massive social unrest could result in the restoration of the old regime. Communist officials had “nowhere to retreat,” so they firmly upheld the ideological tenets that solidified the regime by filling every crack of its edifice.

In the late phase of Stalin’s rule, the ideology lost much of its impulse and appeal. The revolutionary spirit had been “exorcised” out of it; its tenets became fossilized and were reduced to ritual. Apparatchiks of the new generation did not share romantic illusions and conformed to the standard rituals of the “Church of Marxism” without giving them much thought. Hypocrisy and cynicism were filling the now empty shell of ideology to the brim.<sup>284</sup>

Then came de-radicalization ushered in by Khrushchev. Loosened ideological restraints legalized acquisitiveness of moderate scale. As political rule became less tyrannical, economic centralization was weakened as well. Formally, the system of central planning and subordination remained without much change; but a parallel informal system of horizontal and vertical arrangements, agreements, and adjustments emerged and quickly developed. In experts’ opinion, the post-Khrushchev Soviet economy was no longer managed as a “command system.” Instead, it became “an economy of understandings,” or a complex “bureaucratic market” which traded, in addition to goods and services, also in “power and rank, rules and exceptions, social position – basically in anything that had any value.” As an example, the director of a plant would now be able to bargain before accepting an increased output assignment from the central planning authority, and in exchange for

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid., p. 70.



his consent he would likely receive additional awards, an extra shipment of valued commodity, and a tacit permission to disregard some clauses in government regulations.<sup>285</sup>

Gaidar calls this “parallel market” of bureaucratic arrangements and agreements a usual but subordinate part of normal market economies which operate with property and prices. There, relations of “understanding” go along with market relations per se -- like gestures go along with spoken words. The Soviet “bureaucratic market,” however, was the primary form of exchanges, like gestures and signs are primary for those who cannot speak.

As the Soviet regime was de-radicalized, it brought to life a growing shadow economy. That growth was nourished by increasing embezzlement of public resources (*khishchenia*) and a spread of inflated production records (*pripiski*). Both became possible due to spreading bribery that involved the highest level of the nomenklatura.

For example, Uzbekistan’s cotton-growing industry was actually producing 5 million tons of cotton per year, but its shipments to fabric producers in Russia were reported at 6 million. Recipients were bribed to accept half-empty containers as full, and to count low-grade cotton as high-grade. Bribes were also given to “patrons” in Moscow for cover-up – all the way up to the Kremlin.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Gaidar, *ibid.*, p. 73, with a reference to works by Vitaly Naishul.

<sup>286</sup> Interview with Vladimir Kalinichenko, retired criminal investigator. *Bulvar Gordona* (a Kiev weekly), November 16, 2004.

Subsequently, some Uzbek officials who got prosecuted for those offenses (in Yuri Andropov's time) blamed the culture of eye-washing encouraged by Moscow: "Brezhnev was the leader of the state, and he could not help knowing that our capacity was limited at 5 million tons. But in his address at the party conference in Tashkent, he called on Secretary Rashidov to surpass ourselves and produce six million instead of five – to which Rashidov was apparently forced to answer, 'It will be difficult, but we will do our utmost.'" Bluff became the style of Soviet rule since Khrushchev.<sup>287</sup>

Bribes and misappropriation of growing scale soon accrued significant wealth in the hands of select members of the nomenklatura.<sup>288</sup> But there were no ways to openly use or even reveal that wealth.<sup>289</sup>

The perverted nature of the Soviet economy based on artificial prices, anti-proprietary constraints, and inapt management became vivid in the growth of underground entrepreneurs known as *tsekhoviki* (literally, "production shop

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> Telman Gdlian, the most famous investigator of high-profile corruption cases including the "cotton affair," recalled afterwards: "I was astonished at the unbelievable amount of wealth that we were confiscating [from prosecuted regional party bosses and other high-ranking officials]: one regional party chief had 6 million rubles' worth of gold, another had 5.4 million – it would have been even more in dollar equivalent then. In those times of relatively non-stratified society, this was like a nuclear bomb explosion." (Interview with Telman Gdlian. *Versia*, June 11, 2008).

<sup>289</sup> Confiscated barrels of golden jewelry that had been hidden in underground blocks of cement are one example of the dead-end character of such accumulation. In an even more striking example, a district party chief in Kazakhstan who could not resist acquiring a used Mercedes car had to hide it in a barn at a sheep farm. He would go there to secretly drive his Mercedes through the fields around the farm for an hour or two each week. (The story is rendered by former prosecuting investigator Vladimir Kalinichenko, *ibid.*).

managers”). They “commercialized” the work of state-owned manufacturing facilities (usually, clothing factories) and were able to generate high profits, which they pocketed. Typically, such entrepreneurs would use government materials to produce more goods than reported, or more expensive goods than reported, or would produce unreported goods out of privately procured materials. In any case, the produced consumer goods (that would typically be of better quality than average mass products) were easily sold for cash in retail stores “in disguise” of state-owned goods. The profits were shared within the chain of producers, sales operators, and the state officials assigned to control them all. Such operations were brilliantly conceived underground conspiracies. From the standpoint of Soviet law, they were severely persecuted and punished as organized crime (a.k.a. “the Soviet mafia”) -- although those entrepreneurs were only filling in for inefficiencies and shortages of consumer goods supply.<sup>290</sup>

Thus, in Gaidar’s characterization of late Soviet system, “the monolith had begun to crack.” The society emerging inside the post-totalitarian state was “ugly, shady, semi-criminal, and oligarchic,” but it “grew and matured within the greater System, pressurizing that system, demanding some kind of change, some kind of lawful outlet for the desire, the opportunity to manage property freely or event to own it free and clear.”<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> A detailed story of the *tsekhoviki* affairs can be found in: Glukhoe delo (“a dull affair”). *Versia*, March 22, 2010. URL: [http://versia.ru/articles/2010/mar/22/sekretnie\\_materialy\\_obhss](http://versia.ru/articles/2010/mar/22/sekretnie_materialy_obhss)

<sup>291</sup> Gaidar, *ibid.*, p. 74.

When Guy Sorman visited the Soviet Union in 1989, he observed that the system of “parallel markets” was the epitome of the ideology-induced principle of doublethink. He quoted a celebrated poet, Andrei Voznesensky, explaining to him: “We have learned since childhood to separate truth from words; to think is one thing; to speak is something different.” That duplicity, remarked Sorman, was present in the everyday life of the people, and it helped to understand how the people survived in that system. He noted that “under the semblance of socialist labor and socialist trade, black market and private labor were saving the economy from collapse.” According to Soviet economists that he interviewed, over 80 percent of the population were regular consumers of products and services in the “parallel market.” Virtually everybody, as far as he could see, had to produce something for the “parallel market” in order to be able to consume there. Thus, concluded Sorman, “the whole Soviet society is drawn into double thinking, double acting, double speeches, and double morals.”<sup>292</sup>

***Society of “greengrocers”: the last Soviet generation***

Vaclav Havel created a striking symbol of compliance to post-totalitarian ideocracy by describing a vegetable shop window with the slogan, “Workers of the world, unite!”<sup>293</sup> Havel’s “greengrocer” who posts that slogan symbolizes the ordinary citizen’s token compliance with the regime that is based on

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<sup>292</sup> Guy Sorman, *ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>293</sup> Vaclav Havel. *The Power of the Powerless* (1978).

falseness. That token compliance becomes complicity in the system's lies. The symbolic greengrocer is "both a victim and a supporter of the system": Havel shows that "the system" is not imposed by one group upon another, but it is "something that permeates the entire society and is a factor in shaping it, something that may seem impossible to grasp or define, for it is in the nature of a mere principle."<sup>294</sup>

That evasive phenomenon described by Havel might be called, in modern terms, "mental software" that guides individual and group conduct. "Individuals need not believe all those mystifications [of the regime], but they must behave as though they did," remarked Havel.<sup>295</sup>

The Russian writer Vladimir Voinovich made essentially the same conclusion about Soviet life: "The phenomenon of the Soviet system was in the fact that the lower classes lied to the upper classes, the upper classes lied to the lower classes and themselves demanded the lower classes to lie to them."<sup>296</sup>

### **Exhibit 1.3.2: "Greengrocers," Soviet style**

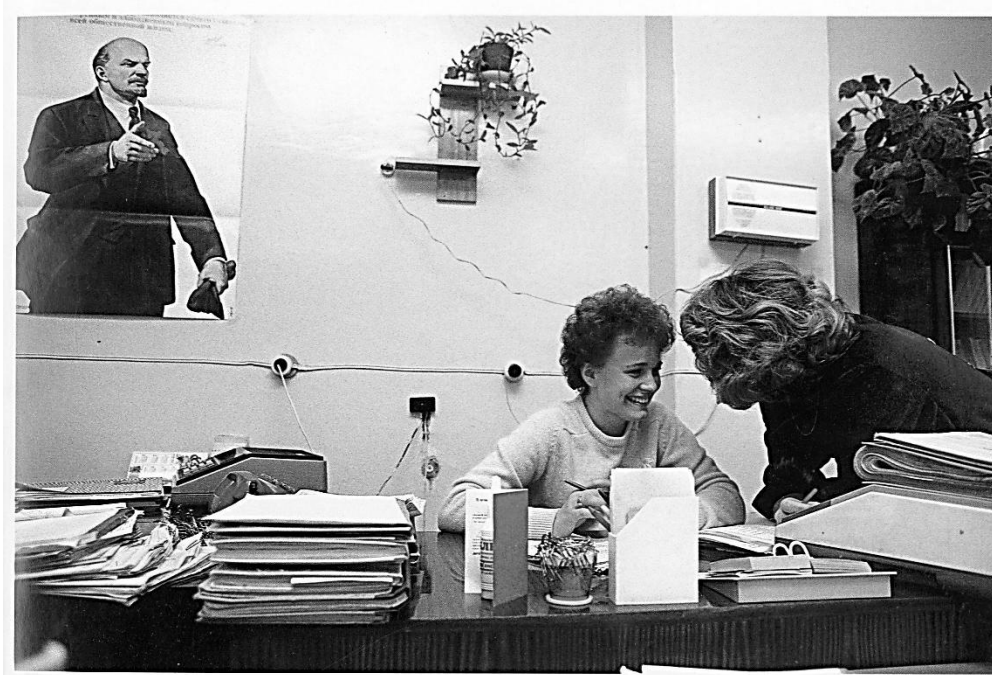
These documentary photos from "One Day in the Life of the Soviet Union" published in 1987 accurately match Vaclav Havel's example of "a greengrocer with a poster" as a symbol of token compliance with the regime, and also the epitome of falseness and doublethink.

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<sup>294</sup> *Vaclav Havel or Living in Truth. Twenty-two Essays*. London: Faber, 1987, p. 53.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>296</sup> Vladimir Voinovich. *File No. 34840* (1993).



A Lenin poster sloppily pinned up in the office of a fishing coop looks like a direct quote from Vaclav Havel's text



In the office of a Soviet Army general, Lenin's portrait mutely blends with the design of walls and furniture – like a trademark stamp on a product.

Elaborating on that formula, Voinovich explained: “All or nearly all Soviet people know that what matters in the Soviet Union is not written laws, but the unwritten rules of behavior.” Those rules prescribe that one should not stand out or take too much initiative, and should always vote unanimously with others. Orders

from superiors, no matter how absurd they may seem, should be taken obediently, although it is not necessary to fulfill them. One should not show too much interest in politics or Soviet history; it is much better to be “moderately patriotic” and limit newspaper reading to the sports pages.<sup>297</sup>

Voinovich pointed out that such shifty behavior of the “Soviet people” was not ethnically determined -- it was shaped by “the rules of conduct and conditions of life that influenced the entire lives of several generations.”<sup>298</sup>

The “greengrocer” phase of the Soviet life was characterized as “a rare combination of insanity and stupidity” in which “the parroting of a moribund orthodoxy seemed a normal and natural condition.” In that world reminiscent of Kafka and Gogol “doublethink was the condition of life.”<sup>299</sup>

Looking back, a Russian journalist recalls:

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<sup>297</sup> Vladimir Voinovich. *The Anti-Soviet Soviet Union* (1985).

<sup>298</sup> Voinovich compared the cultivation of the Homo Sovieticus traits to holding people in a prison cell for a lengthy period time: irrespective of ethnicity, they would inevitably learn “to deceive their guards, to conceal small objects in the creases of their clothing, and hide bread under their pillow.” And even after they have been released, “they may long retain those habits and even pass them on to their descendants.” (Ibid., p. 15).

<sup>299</sup> Robert Conquest. Foreword to: Luba Brezhneva. *The World I Left Behind*. Random House, 1995.

“By the middle of Brezhnev’s rule, many of us were already accomplished “closet dissidents” or overt cryptographers: we relied on our own perceptions rather than on the rattle from newspapers and television. We could read between the lines of any newspaper article or government announcement. [...] We could not help feeling irritated by meaningless slogans, such as “Economy must be economical!” and the signs “Glory to CPSU!” seen everywhere. Irritating was empty talk at official meetings, phony reports, and mandatory subscription to the party newspapers and journals. [...] That was an epoch of universal shortages alongside with piles of derelict goods and heaps of waste.

And those who had access to scarce supplies controlled everything. Everybody sought their friendship and disposition. The whole country turned into “capitalist underground”, a total black market where money could buy any goods and services, and big money could buy virtually anything.”<sup>300</sup>

Thus, Gaidar concludes, the anti-proprietorial component of the ideology – which used to make it “both coherent and unique” -- was the first to degenerate. Now the regime was “holding on out of sheer inertia, shielding itself from the blinding light of reason by hiding its head in the tattered old shawl of ritual.” The nomenklatura itself was showing most vividly how senseless the ritual had become. “The reality of regional Party chairmen, Cabinet ministers, and millionaire kolkhoz directors singing revolutionary songs about their life as ‘hungry slaves’, of how ‘their outraged reason boils and leads them into battle to the death’ was far more surreal, vicious, and murderous satire than anything Zhvanetsky or Ionesco could invent,” notes Gaidar.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Dmitry Karalis. “National Hero?” *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, #46, 2006 (in Russian).

<sup>301</sup> Gaidar, *ibid.*, p. 74-75.



### Exhibit 1.3.3: duplicity of senseless Soviet rituals.

Documentary photos from CPSU congresses of the 1970s .

As Yegor Gaidar aptly observed, “The reality of regional Party chairmen, Cabinet ministers, and millionaire kolkhoz directors singing revolutionary songs about their life as ‘hungry slaves’, of how ‘their outraged reason boils and leads them into battle to the death’ was far more surreal, vicious, and murderous satire than anything Zhvanetsky or Ionesco could invent.”



Some observers failed to grasp the dualistic and duplicitous character of the Soviet system – if they looked at it “through the prism of one’s own culture-bound standards and failing to understand that these standards might be totally inapplicable.”<sup>302</sup> For instance, misled by such cultural blindness, intellectuals like Sidney and Beatrice Webb sincerely believed that Stalinism was a new height of human civilization. They mistakenly took the Soviet constitution at its face value and ignored the “unwritten rules” of the system.

In a similar manner, observers who took ritual at its face value in Brezhnev’s time misinterpreted its true meanings. One example of such misinterpretation was shown by George W. H. Bush when he attended the funeral of Leonid Brezhnev in Moscow in 1982: a non-significant token gesture (the sign of the cross) from Brezhnev’s widow was described as a statement of civil disobedience – essentially, a rebellion -- against the communist system.<sup>303</sup>

But in reality, Brezhnev himself did not consider paying tribute to religious rituals as incongruous with his position of the Communist Party leader. His niece recalls that religious rituals were a part of Leonid Brezhnev’s habit, “imbibed like mother’s milk” in his childhood. Every year, Leonid asked his brother

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<sup>302</sup> Andrzej Walicki, *ibid.*, p. 470.

<sup>303</sup> As George Bush later recalled, he was “astonished” when he saw Brezhnev’s widow reach down and make the sign of the cross on her late husband’s chest before the closing of the coffin. Based on that testimony, other commentators suggested that this had been “a profound act of silent protest and civil disobedience.” It was suggested that, by tracing the sign of the cross over her dead husband’s body, Victoria Petrovna Brezhneva showed she was hoping that the communist empire based on faith in Marx and Lenin “was wrong.” (Gary Thomas in *Christian Times*, October 3, 1994, p. 26). Apparently, this example became widely quoted since George W.H. Bush brought it up in his speech at an annual prayer breakfast the following year.

#### **Exhibit 1.3.4: “Multicolority of Soviet grey”**

Late Soviet system was no longer as “black-and-white” as in the times of Stalin. But its de-radicalization did not mean liberalization; it primarily meant increased duplicity and fakeness.

This photo shows Leonid Brezhnev toasting with top Moscow clergy at a private reception – a scene that does not fit into a “stereotypical” notion about the relationship between the CPSU and the church in the Soviet Union.

Source: *Ukrainska Pravda*.



to light candles in church for the peace of their parents' souls. He always marked Easter by eating the traditional cakes and decorated eggs, and toasted a drink to that occasion.<sup>304</sup>

This example is a case in point for the claim of modern historians that it was inaccurate and oversimplified to interpret the Soviet system “in black-and-white;” its actual picture consisted of “a variety and multicolority of grey.”<sup>305</sup>

A picture of Soviet life as “a variety of grey” is featured in the writings of Sergei Dovlatov, who is considered “the literary voice of the last Soviet generation.”<sup>306</sup> While previous generations of Soviet writers promoted “correct ideas” as opposed to “wrong ideas,” Dovlatov, on behalf of his generation, was saying that ideas did not exist at all, so they could not induce the world to change:

“The human brain has not changed since Aristotle’s times. All the more so, human conscience has not changed either. So, there is no progress. There is only motion which is based on instability.”<sup>307</sup>

That negation of ideas and ideologies defeated the “moral rhetoric of both adherents and opponents of the Soviet power.”<sup>308</sup> It created an ethical paradigm

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<sup>304</sup> Luba Brezhneva, *ibid.*, p. 364.

<sup>305</sup> Commentary by Serhii Plohii (a Harvard University professor) in *Ukrainska Pravda*, April 23, 2012.

<sup>306</sup> Aleksandr Genis. *Dovlatov and His Environs*. URL: <http://archive.svoboda.org/programs/cicles/dovlatov/>

<sup>307</sup> Sergei Dovlatov. *The Zone*.

<sup>308</sup> Genis, *ibid*, part 1, “The Last Soviet Generation.”

in which people existed beyond good and evil, “like cats,” as Aleksandr Genis put it.

In Dovlatov’s own admission,

“I realized that it was silly to divide people into good and bad, or into non-affiliated and communists. Or into the villains and the righteous.”<sup>309</sup>

Dovlatov and his followers see no difference between “a Soviet type” and “an anti-Soviet type.”<sup>310</sup> For them, the antithesis to the Soviet regime is “life in all its complexity, depth, and unpredictability -- viewed without doctrinaire eye-glasses of ideas and constructs.”<sup>311</sup>

In his first big collection of stories, “The Zone,” Dovlatov described a Soviet prison camp through the eyes of a guard (which he had been while on military service duty). Contrary to traditional dichotomies of prisoners vs. law enforcers – when one of the two sides is equated with “heroes” and the other with “monsters” – Dovlatov discovers with surprise that there is little difference between them:

“special regime prisoners and camp overseers are absurdly similar in all sorts of things: speech, style of thinking, folklore, aesthetic canons, and moral judgments. [...] It is the same cruel world on both sides of the barbed wire.”<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> Dovlatov, *The Zone*.

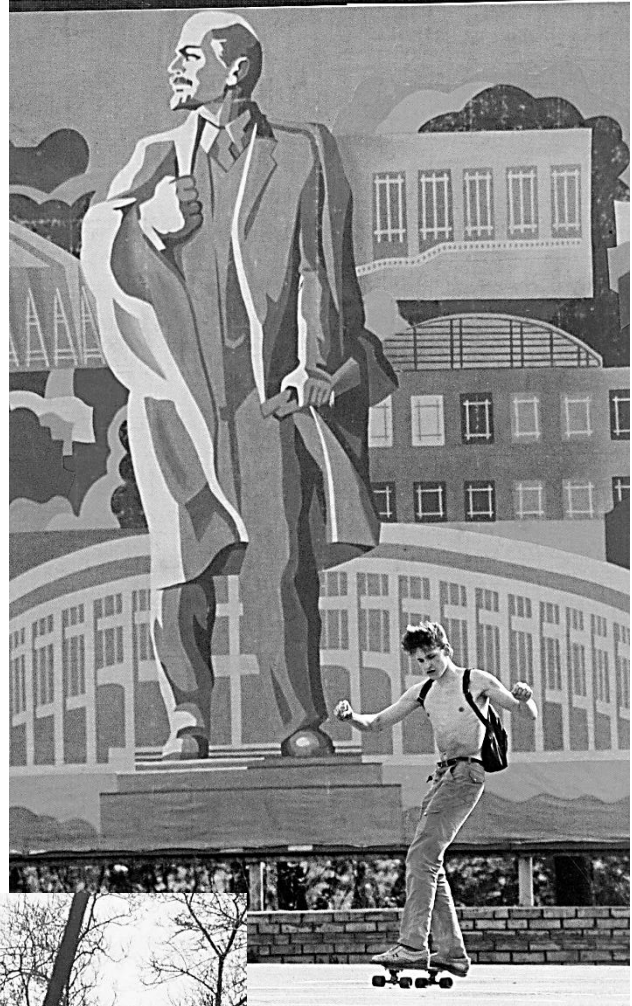
<sup>310</sup> Sergei Dovlatov. *The Invisible Book*. Ardis, 1979, p. 29.

<sup>311</sup> Genis, *ibid*.

<sup>312</sup> Dovlatov, *The Invisible Book*, p. 25-26.

### Exhibit 1.3.5: Soviet symbols as a part of landscape

The last Soviet generation, as testified by Sergei Dovlatov, perceived the Soviet power not as a political system, but as “the mode of life of a state.” His characters were not burdened by choosing between right and wrong ideas – they felt that “ideas did not exist at all.”



Gigantic Soviet symbols placed all around seemed to be a part of nature. People sometimes referred to them matter-of-factly as “the totems.”

His observations convince Dovlatov that “the Soviet power is no longer a form of government that can be changed. It is the mode of life of our state.”<sup>313</sup> A critic explains that Dovlatov perceives the Soviet system as “the national form of the universal absurdity.”

For him, it is “the zone of trouble from which one cannot escape because that is an indispensable condition of existence.”<sup>314</sup>

Dovlatov described how people adapted to the system by becoming its functionaries. He tells the story of a talented young writer who “in addition to being talented, was far from stupid” and understood how to please his publishers: he had to demonstrate “an optimally modest amount of literary ability” – but not too much because “talent makes people suspicious.” So this writer

“adjusted his talent accordingly and published sixteen books in a row. But with each successive book, the young writer simplified his tasks. He produced them competently and quickly, and better than most [...] His infinitely compliant nature, coupled with his craving for comfort, transformed him into a perfect functionary.”<sup>315</sup>

Dovlatov himself becomes “a functionary” when he takes a temporary job with the editorial office of a literary magazine. This example brightly illustrates how “the system” is perpetuated by “greengrocers” themselves:

“I, who had been a victim of the literary regime, was now transformed into one of its functionaries. “Functionary” is an all-inclusive word. Whoever you are and whatever your convictions, once you hold an official position, you become a man of functions.

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<sup>313</sup> *The Zone*, introduction.

<sup>314</sup> Genis, *ibid.*

<sup>315</sup> *The Invisible Book*, pp. 105-106.

It is impossible without a ruinous scandal to extricate yourself from the limitations of your position. Your function oppresses you. In deference to it your ideas become ever so slightly distorted. You no longer belong to yourself. In the past, I, being a writer, had always had every reason to hate the officials of literature. Now it was I who was hated. I led a double life. At my office, I strangled the living word. Then I put on my cap and went to [other publishing offices]. And they strangled me. I was both the predator and the prey. <sup>316</sup>

Dovlatov's "invisible book"<sup>317</sup> symbolizes the doublethink of Soviet ideological controls in Brezhnev's time. While the system continued to restrict writers' freedom, it often did that "half-heartedly," and despite partial bans and restrictions, such writers were turning into popular cult figures of their time. Most notably, the Party elite joined the ranks of their admirers but simultaneously enforced orders to restrict their visibility on ideological grounds.

This is best exemplified by the story of two cult writers and performers, Vladimir Vysotsky and Mikhail Zhvanetsky. One was an actor and song writer; the other, a writer and performer of social satire. They became two pillars of Soviet "counter-culture." Both were circulated in "audio samizdat" in millions of copies. But officially, they were frowned upon and marginally tolerated. Their performances took place in private or semi-private settings and were recorded by

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<sup>316</sup> "The Invisible Book", p. 113.

<sup>317</sup> "Invisible Book" is the title of Dovlatov's long autobiographical essay. A central theme of its narrative is the writer's attempts to get his book published, with years of efforts to collect approvals from authorities of different levels. In the end, even after he has been paid the official honorarium, the publication is stopped altogether when the author is accused of ideological transgressions.



### Exhibit 1.3.6: “Wolf Hunt” by Vladimir Vysotsky

*This is one of nearly 800 songs written by Vladimir Vysotsky that widely circulated in “audio-samizdat” for many years until the poet’s death in 1980. As noted by contemporary critics, Vysotsky’s songs responded to the Soviet person’s down-heart desire to break out of the stagnant life in which genuine feelings and honesty were replaced by commonplace routine of doublethink and falseness.*

*“Wolf Hunt” is among his most famous “signature” works, written in 1968. Three years later, Vysotsky wrote an ironic untitled sequel to it in which he described a nomenklatura official (“an executive comrade”) getting interested in that song after hearing it in a “bad audio copy.” He summons the poet to his office to hear the song live, then says, “What wolves, to hell? This song is about me, and about all of us.”*

*English translation by Kathryn & Bruce Hamilton*

<p>In my flight, sinews bursting, I hurtle, But as yesterday - so now today, They've cornered me! Driven me, encircled, Towards the huntsmen that wait for their prey! From the fir-trees the rifle-shots quicken - In the shadows the huntsmen lie low. As they fire, the wives somersault, stricken, Living targets brought down on the snow.</p> <p>They're hunting wolves! The hunt is on, pursuing The wily predators, the she-wolf and her brood. The beaters shout, the dogs bay, almost spewing. The flags on the snow are red, as red as the blood.</p> <p>In the fight heavy odds have opposed us, But the merciless huntsmen keep ranks. With the flags on their ropes they've enclosed us. They take aim and they fire at point blank. For a wolf cannot break with tradition. With milk sucked from the she-wolfs dugs The blind cubs learn the stern prohibition Never, never to cross the red flags!</p> <p>They're hunting wolves! The hunt is on, pursuing The wily predators, the she-wolf and her brood. The beaters shout, the dogs bay, almost spewing. The flags on the snow are red, as red as the blood.</p>	<p>. We are swift and our jaws are rapacious.</p> <p>Why then, chief, like a tribe that's oppressed, Must we rush towards the weapons that face us And that precept be never transgressed? For a wolf cannot change the old story The end looms and my time's, almost done. Now the huntsman who's made me his quarry Gives a smile as he raises his gun.</p> <p>They're hunting wolves! The hunt is on, pursuing The wily predators, the she-wolf and her brood. The beaters shout, the dogs bay, almost spewing. The flags on the snow are red, as red as the blood.</p> <p>But revolt and the life-force are stronger Than the fear that the red flags instill From behind come dismayed cries of anger As I cheat them, with joy, of their kill. In my flight, sinews bursting I hurtle, But the outcome is different today! I was cornered! They trapped me encircled! But the huntsmen were foiled of their prey!</p> <p>They're hunting wolves! The hunt is on, pursuing The wily predators, the she-wolf and her brood. The beaters shout, the dogs bay, almost spewing. The flags on the snow are red, as red as the blood.</p>
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amateurs. They were never allowed to perform on prime stages or prime TV. Nor did their texts get published in Soviet time.<sup>318</sup> Yet, their recordings sounded in the homes of every family. What is notable, they were enjoyed in the homes of the Politburo members and KGB officers just as well.<sup>319</sup>

As noted by contemporary critics, Vysotsky's songs responded to the Soviet person's down-heart desire to break out of the stagnant life filled with commonplace routine of doublethink and falseness. In the Soviet "cemetery of the spirit," Vysotsky was "creating a reality that every Soviet person could try on -- in which human feelings were genuine and bared, rather than hidden under a thick shell of mimicry."<sup>320</sup>

Mikhail Zhvanetsky waged his war against the culture of doublethink in a different way: he was revered "for saying out loud what everybody knew but would not say."<sup>321</sup> His humor is based on "compressing truth into a formula, and

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<sup>318</sup> Rare and brief appearances were exceptions confirming the rule.

<sup>319</sup> As pointed out by Andrei Okara, a modern Russian philosopher in "Vysotsky as a Guide to Higher Worlds," *Ukrainska Pravda*, 25 January, 2013. There is evidence that Brezhnev personally liked to listen to Zhvanetsky and Vysotsky tapes in private (e.g. *Bulvar Gordona*, Nov. 14, 2006).

<sup>320</sup> Andrei Okara, *ibid*.

<sup>321</sup> Dmitry Zanerv. "Odessan Ice-Breaker." URL: [http://www.jvanetsky.ru/data/text/pf/odessky\\_ledokol/](http://www.jvanetsky.ru/data/text/pf/odessky_ledokol/)

shaping the formula into a witticism.”<sup>322</sup> As an example, here is a fragment from one of his famous monologues that imitates the style of an encyclopedic entry:<sup>323</sup>

“In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, friendship mutated so much that admits betrayal, no longer needs rendezvous, letters or emotional discussions, and even allows only one befriender available. From there, it smoothly evolves into companionship. The term “companionship” denotes subclinical forms of the rampant 19<sup>th</sup> century friendship. [...]

Truth in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century tolerates some amount of lies and is named “authentic.” Courage, on the opposite, acquires hidden forms and is manifested in extreme conditions of TV broadcasting.

The concept of honesty is now interpreted much broader – from some trickery and omission to full coverage of a big issue, but from one side only.

Principled behavior is now tolerated easier. It allows to assert two viewpoints at the same time, which is why debates have become more interesting as debaters switch to each other’s viewpoints in the course of a debate, which makes it harder to observe, but adds intensity and brightness.

The sweeping feeling that includes some ruthlessness and brutality is called kindness. The shape of a circle is taken by full trust combined with total control. [...]

With a microscope, one can easily see mutual assistance and solidarity, although in a very weak state.

All in all, we can note with satisfaction that nowadays concepts and feelings have lost the repulsive clarity they used to have, so they easily and naturally flow into one another. Like different colors of the spectrum that form our present-day white color.”

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<sup>322</sup> Mikhail Zhvanetsky. “What is Humor? *Collection of Works*, vol. 3, p. 82 (in Russian).

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 276-277.

Many of Zhvanetsky's witty formulas became widely used idioms of everyday language. They include, among others: "Let us furiously argue about the taste of oysters – with those who actually ate them"; "Thinking is hard – this is why most people judge"; "Russia's history is a permanent struggle of ignorance with injustice"; "Our freedom is what we do when nobody is watching"; "Intuition is our substitute for information"; etc. Zhvanetsky is credited for having described "all layers of Soviet life" without any veil – "like a car engine with the open hood, where we see every cog and belt and feel the smell of gasoline." From today's perspective, his works are perceived as a "historical testimony about late Soviet civilization" and "an encyclopedia of the Homo Sovieticus."<sup>324</sup> That encyclopedia vividly demonstrates the grotesque scale of late Soviet "adaptive" culture of doublethink.

***Doublethink and Incapacitated Leadership:  
the Case of Mikhail Gorbachev***

Unlike the "inner party" described by George Orwell, the Soviet nomenklatura was susceptible to the culture of doublethink in much the same way as the masses. Their ideological indoctrination was deeper than anybody else's: ideological frames were made their second self. If one looks at the records of the

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<sup>324</sup> Dmitry Zhaner, *ibid.*

Politburo meetings under Gorbachev, it may appear that high-ranking CPSU officials were not able to express themselves outside those logocratic frames.<sup>325</sup>

One special skill that career apparatchiks had to cultivate was the art of intrigue. A perfect illustration to it can be found in Mikhail Voslensky's essay "One Day of Denis Ivanovich."<sup>326</sup> With good reason, such functionaries of the apparatus were called "cannibals in suits boiling in their own lies."<sup>327</sup> They showed sophisticated cunningness in building up clientelistic alliances inside the bureaucracy, were very good at "reading the mind" of their patron, and knew how to pursue their personal interest while promoting with impeccable accuracy the "party line" of the moment. Gail Sheehy's description of "thinking on two levels" <sup>328</sup> essentially presents the "nomenklatura edition" of the universal trait of doublethink. She called such behavior "chameleonic."

It goes without saying that Mikhail Gorbachev had to master all those skills in the course of his career. Despite his Soviet party "schooling," Gorbachev

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<sup>325</sup> "In the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee: Meetings Notes by Anatoly Cherniayev, Vadim Medvedev, and Georgiy Shakhnazarov, 1985-1991. Published by Gorbachev Foundation, 2006. 784 p. (in Russian). Those unofficial notes demonstrate how the Soviet top rulers, when talking about real-life policy issues, invariably resorted to party clichés -- even inside their narrow circle, among themselves, and not speaking "on the record."

<sup>326</sup> Mikhail Voslensky. *Nomenklatura*. Doubleday, 1984. The essay in question -- intended as an antithesis to Solzhenitsyn's famous short story -- vividly describes the world of petty intrigue that made the sense of life for the Nomenklatura.

<sup>327</sup> According to Anatoly Sobchak, that phrase was coined by the sculptor Ernst Neizvestnyi (Anatoly Sobchak. *Once Upon a Time There Lived a Communist Party*. St.Petersburg, 1995.).

<sup>328</sup> Gail Sheehy. *The Man Who Changed the World*. HarperCollins, 1990, p. 145-146 (discussed in more detail earlier in this chapter).

was able to remain a heartfelt and good-natured person with a “distinctively human face,” according to Anatoly Sobchak. But Sobchak also points out that Gorbachev had to exceed all other top functionaries in cunningness and intrigue -- because otherwise he would not have been able to get rid of so many old guard members of the Politburo and the Central Committee within a short time.<sup>329</sup>

As noted by his former aid and subsequent biographer Andrei Grachev, Gorbachev, with a flawless biography and the service record of “a Comsomol wonder boy,” looked a promising new generation cadre of the Party leadership – and he behaved according to that image. This meant “bringing new energy and innovation – as the life-weary party bosses expected – and simultaneously demonstrating his respectful loyalty to them.” Grachev further remarks that Gorbachev -- like his many colleagues in the party apparatus -- was used to living in “the double world” divided between informal talks and official “façade” activities. That world seemed “immutable and unshakeable” to them. Apparatchiks of that generation were able “to deliver eloquent praises” for Leonid Brezhnev’s “outstanding Leninist leadership” when they spoke in public; but in private, they would be telling each other with indignation that “everything was rotten through and things could not go on like that much longer.”<sup>330</sup>

Gorbachev also learned the skill of evasive speaking that he called “the dialectical approach.” Even his university classmates recalled that “no one was ever quite sure what he stood for” because he usually wanted “to entertain a thesis

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<sup>329</sup> Anatoly Sobchak, *ibid.*

<sup>330</sup> Andrei Grachev. *Gorbachev*. Moscow, Vagrius, 2001.

and its contradiction at the same time” and thus avoid committing himself to either side in a debate.<sup>331</sup>

Those qualities were fully revealed in Gorbachev’s performance as the Soviet leader. Anatoly Sobchak recalled his work with Gorbachev in the Supreme Soviet as follows:

“Gorbachev so often changed his views, and so often made alliances with most reactionary forces that sometimes we wondered: is all this not pharisaism and mimicry for the sake of short-term tactical gain? Many [democratic opposition members] were persuading me that Gorbachev could not be trusted in anything, that this was a man with a double or even triple false bottom. On the following day, his actions sometimes totally disproved those suspicions, but other times he would fully confirmed them.”<sup>332</sup>

Andrzej Walicki notes that there was an “unresolved contradiction in all Gorbachev’s ideas.” In Walicki’s view, Gorbachev as the leader of perestroika was split between “two persons.” One of them was “deeply aware that ‘everything was rotten through’ and that his country could not live that way’ any longer.” The other, however, was “profoundly committed to socialism,” and even though “unable to give it a precise definition,” considered socialism “the most significant thing in his life.”<sup>333</sup> Gorbachev was famously criticized for wanting to be the Pope and Luther at the same time.<sup>334</sup> He was unable to choose between the evolutionary and revolutionary sides of perestroika; between its continuity and discontinuity; between market reforms and

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<sup>331</sup> Gail Sheehy, *ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>332</sup> Anatoly Sobchak, *ibid.*

<sup>333</sup> Andrzej Walicki, *ibid.*, p. 547.

<sup>334</sup> Guy Sorman, *ibid.* The same point was also made by Martin Malia in his famous essay “To the Stalin Mausoleum.”

subsidized prices, etc. For that reason, critics such as Mikhail Heller or Aleksandr Zinoviev profoundly distrusted Gorbachev's initiatives. Heller argued that Gorbachev's slogans were no more than a remake of Stalin's industrialization mottos: they were consistently based on "concealed quotes" from Stalin.<sup>335</sup> Zinoviev claimed that Gorbachev's promises to transform the Soviet system were like "the promise of an animal trainer to teach crocodiles to fly."<sup>336</sup> Many were asking the same question: how can Gorbachev rely on the ruling party in carrying out such reforms that intend to reduce that party's authority?<sup>337</sup>

It was argued that the Soviet ruling class – including Gorbachev himself -- was fundamentally incompetent to provide leadership in conditions of competitive politics: Soviet rulers did not know how to persuade and negotiate. Guy Sorman made that point quite emphatically:

"Let us look at the personalities of Ligachev, Gorbachev, Yeltsin and other leaders of their level. The selection criteria that brought them to the top prepared them to give orders but not to persuade. As long as the society had been obedient, they were able to govern. But now that there is a need to build a social consensus, the nomenklatura leaders reveal their incompetence. The soviet ruling class can only give commands or at best declare slogans. But it cannot negotiate or persuade; an open system is not its element."<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> Heller, *ibid.*, pp. xvii-xix.

<sup>336</sup> Aleksander Zinoviev. *Crocodiles Cannot Fly. Vladimir Tismaneanu and Judith Shapiro (eds.) debates on the Future of Communism.* St. Martin's Press, 1991.

<sup>337</sup> As pointed out by Mikhail Heller, *ibid.*

<sup>338</sup> Guy Sorman, *ibid.*, p. 32.



The Russian historian Roy Medvedev later convincingly illustrated that point.<sup>339</sup> All decisions of the Politburo traditionally had to be adopted by consensus and with little debate; so when a pressing and controversial issue revealed irreconcilable differences within the “collective leadership,” Gorbachev could only stop the debate and postpone the unresolved issue, also saying: “A situation like this did not take place at Politburo meetings in many decades.”<sup>340</sup>

In Andrzej Walicki’s analysis, Gorbachev’s doublethink was neither hypocrisy, nor cunning tactics. It stemmed from his “incurably ideological Soviet patriotism”: Gorbachev “was equally sincere in his resolve to change the system radically, and in his desire to preserve continuity in Soviet history and identity.” Walicki notes that “Gorbachev’s fear of being seen as a renegade shows that he was still a prisoner of the ideological fatherland despite his own factual rejection of communist principles.”<sup>341</sup>

Looking back, Gorbachev’s biographers point out that his dual mindset was perhaps the only factor capable of destroying the Soviet system from within. An ideal product of the system and its faithful supporter proved to be its most dangerous “enemy within” – when he attempted to reform, improve, and save that system. That is only a seeming paradox: the ideocratic regime’s most vulnerable

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<sup>339</sup> Roy Medvedev. *The Soviet Union. Final Years*. ACT Publishers, 2010 (in Russian).

<sup>340</sup> “*In the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee*,” p. 117.

<sup>341</sup> Andrzej Walicki, *ibid.*, p. 553.

point was ideological heresy, “a rebellion of angels,” and in order to succeed, it had to be led by a flawlessly genuine follower.<sup>342</sup>

Thus, the regime built on lies collapsed when its leaders tried to come to grips with its vices and break out of the vicious circle of duplicity. But it is notable that Gorbachev’s double-mindedness was still reflected in his post-Soviet interviews and statements, so they became acknowledged as manifestations of “the post-Soviet political mind.”<sup>343</sup>

Although the “mental software of the Soviet man” mutated after the fall of the Soviet system, it arguably continued to operate in post-Soviet politics and societies.

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<sup>342</sup> Andrei Grachev, *ibid.*

<sup>343</sup> Vladimir Tismaneanu. The Post-Soviet Political Mind. *Journal of Democracy*, 14(2), 2003.

### **3.3. From Homo Sovieticus to Homo Praevaricatus: Post-Soviet Doublethink**

Post-communist transition expected “a tectonic change” in mental adaptation mechanisms of “the Soviet man” and required the development of “elastic consciousness” – the ability to re-prioritize societal values and needs and accordingly adapt behavior.<sup>344</sup> The actual way in which that change evolved is sometimes described as the transformation of “Homo Sovieticus” into “Homo Praevaricatus,” or “the cunning person.”<sup>345</sup>

Prevaricative behavior was cultivated by Soviet conditions of life, as discussed in the previous section. The Soviet system was breeding “cunning slaves and cunning masters” that were “cunning with each other and towards themselves.”<sup>346</sup> As noted by Yury Levada, cunning behavior is rooted in “normative polycentric relativism,” or blurred boundaries between right and wrong, between acceptable and non-acceptable behavior. It arises from “successive breakdowns of regulatory structures”: in the Russian society, that was an incessant process that started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued through Soviet times.<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> Yury Sayenko. Interview in *Zerkalo Nedeli*, August 1, 2003 (in Russian).

<sup>345</sup> Yury Levada. “Homo Praevaricatus: Russian Doublethink”. *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader*. Archie Brown (ed). Oxford University Press, 2001. That term coined by Yury Levada was subsequently used by other scholars including Richard Rose.

<sup>346</sup> Levada, *ibid.*, p. 314.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 313.

The post-Soviet situation produced a hideous mix of continuity and disruption in regulatory structures and norms.<sup>348</sup> It increased normative confusion and generated “visible normative pluralism” in absence of universally binding authorities. In Mikhail Zhvanetsky’s apt characterization, post-Soviet freedom was “like a traffic signal with all three lights on at the same time.”<sup>349</sup> Also very notably, the alienation between the rulers and the ruled became more expressed, and the “covert cunning” on both sides came out in the open – it became overt.<sup>350</sup>

Thus, adaptation based on the doublethink of conformism – the model of late Soviet period – was replaced by the doublethink of “playing with the rules” and constant search for “a multitude of loopholes” allowing to circumvent the rules or bend them in one’s favor for short-term gain.<sup>351</sup> Such “elasticity of consciousness,” according to sociologists, was most readily demonstrated by “post-Soviet gangsters, corrupt administrators and shifty administrants.”<sup>352</sup> With shadow economy estimated at over 60% of the total, most citizens felt that the country was being ruled by “the mafia and the state bureaucracy.”<sup>353</sup> The same survey revealed that 56% of Ukrainians believed it was wrong to pay taxes, 25% said that one should observe or

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<sup>348</sup> Sayenko, *ibid.*

<sup>349</sup> Mikhail Zhvanetsky, *Collection of Works*, vol. 4.

<sup>350</sup> This point is made by Yuri Levada (*ibid.*, p. 315) and is also developed in writings of Ukrainian sociologists.

<sup>351</sup> Levada, *ibid.*, pp. 314-315.

<sup>352</sup> Sayenko, *ibid.*

<sup>353</sup> Survey data reported by Yuri Sayenko, *ibid.*

disregard the law “depending on the circumstances,” and at least 10% believed that it was best to ignore laws altogether. Similar findings were reported for Russia.<sup>354</sup>

Yury Sayenko described that condition of mass consciousness as “an ugly form of adaptation” that resulted in “overwhelming depreciation of everything” – including ethical values, social norms, and institutions of the state.<sup>355</sup> The resulting confusion and disorientation make the post-Soviet person’s behavior simultaneously cunning and confused. Cunningness is mixed up with infantile and irrational reactions to the world, and that remains the breeding ground for post-Soviet duplicity and doublethink.

Confusion and duplicity dominate in the attitudes of Russians as well as Ukrainians to their own history and symbols. As an example, Stalin’s denunciation for his atrocities is not questioned; but at the same time, his image continues to be used as a positive symbol of Russian and Soviet glory.<sup>356</sup> Russians are content with combining former tsarist and former communist symbols in their state anthem, flag, and coat of arms.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> Yury Levada, *ibid.*

<sup>355</sup> Yury Sayenko, *ibid.*

<sup>356</sup> Protests broke out when Stalin’s images were featured in posters dedicated to Victory Day in Moscow in 2010; currently, some city buses in Moscow bear Stalin’s image in dedication to war memory theme. Volgograd city council recently approved the ordinance that ruled to name their city “Stalingrad” on commemorative holidays. A statue of Stalin was erected in Zaporizhia, Ukraine by the local Communist Party chapter, which also caused numerous protests until that statue got destroyed some weeks later by activists claimed to be linked with the an opponent nationalist party.

<sup>357</sup> The Russian Federation adopted the flag and coat of arms that are based on pre-1917 state symbols (the tricolor flag and the double-headed eagle), but gave up the

The “official” Russian Communist party – the CPRF – declares its ideological (!) unity with the Russian Orthodox Church and claims that the communist party and the church jointly serve “the tormented people.”<sup>358</sup> According to CPRF’s own estimate, at least one-third of communist voters in Russia are Orthodox churchgoers.<sup>359</sup>

In another example of confused “mental software,” many Russians feel nostalgic for the lost “Soviet family of nations,” but at the same time they share xenophobic views in regard to former Soviet nations and demand to tighten immigration control in Russia.<sup>360</sup>

Like in Orwell’s dystopia, Russian public opinion gets easily swayed at the pleasure of the government and suddenly turns against one or another neighboring country -- first, Ukraine, then Estonia, then Georgia – alternately labeling each of them as the arch- enemy of the Russian state.<sup>361</sup>

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pre-1917 Russian anthem and reinstated the anthem that had been commissioned by Stalin, with new alterations in the text.

<sup>358</sup> As emphasized in a recent CPRF newspaper article: “The CPRF, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the whole Russian society have one common ideology, one religion, one nation, and one Motherland – the Great Russia.” Sergei Igumenov in Trudovaia Samara, April 4, 2012. URL: [trudsam.ru/index.php?newsId=598](http://trudsam.ru/index.php?newsId=598)

<sup>359</sup> CPRF press release dated July 21, 2012, URL: [http://kprf.ru/rus\\_soc/108469.html](http://kprf.ru/rus_soc/108469.html)

<sup>360</sup> Findings of the 2008 survey, “Post-Soviet Nostalgia in Russians’ Everyday Discourse.” URL: [http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2011/06/29\\_a\\_3680037.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2011/06/29_a_3680037.shtml)

<sup>361</sup> Ukraine was named a major enemy of Russia in a survey from April 2008 (*Ukrainska Pravda*, May 5, 2008). Estonia came to the top notch in the list of Russia’s enemies in May 2008 after a scandal concerning a Russian military monument relocation in Tallinn. Georgia got to the top of that list in October 2008 when the military conflict about South Ossetia broke out. Victor Shederovich, a popular satirist, commented: “Two weeks of daily injections into viewers’ heads by

In a similar way, many Russians readily succumbed to a hysteric campaign in the media that accompanied the ban on adoptions of Russian children to the U.S. -- they “were prepared to believe that ‘evil Americans’ would not only murder Russian orphans, but posthumously dismantle them into organs as well.”<sup>362</sup>

That ease of steering the post-Soviet mind with propaganda inputs prompted the cult Russian writer Victor Pelevin to put forward the surreal idea of Homo Zapiens, or “the zapping man” – a person “remotely controlled” by television - - in his popular novel, “Generation P.”<sup>363</sup> Pelevin shows the devastating effect of applying refined techniques of advertising and spin to the inexperienced post-Soviet mind with its legacy of lengthy “captivity.”

A psychologist remarks that most voters in Ukraine demonstrate “infantile” behavior rather than traits of grown-up people. A grown-up person reasonably looks for solutions to a problem, tries to understand other viewpoints, cooperates and negotiates, can articulate and defend his rights and interests; a child, on the opposite, evades problems and avoids responsibility; childish behavior is capricious, demanding, and non-thinking; a child expects “to hear a beautiful fairy-tale” and to have all problems resolved by the grown-ups.<sup>364</sup> That observation

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the TV news programs – and Estonia becomes the chief enemy of Russia. Then, all of a sudden, enemy number one is Georgia. Or Ukraine. Central TV can do this easily in two weeks’ time. And by the same token, this can be reversed. Tomorrow, we will be best friends again – if needed.” (Interview to *Zerkalo Nedeli*, April 25, 2008).

<sup>362</sup> Gazeta.ru (editorial), April 1, 2013. URL: [http://www.gazeta.ru/comments/2013/04/01\\_e\\_5235057.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/comments/2013/04/01_e_5235057.shtml)

<sup>363</sup> Victor Pelevin. *Generation II (Homo Zapiens)*. 1999.

<sup>364</sup> Maia Shakhova . *Ukrainska Pravda*, August 20, 2010.

### Exhibit 1.3.7: Confusion of symbols in the post-Soviet mind.

A house in a Russian village decorated with portraits of Marx, Lenin, and Putin, as well as communist and Russian imperial symbols.



An old Ukrainian woman shows up for an apparently important gathering dressed up, and holds an icon with Yanukovich photo inserted, and a waving flag with Yanukovich party logo.



almost verbatim coincides with Yury Levada's remark about Russian voters: " They can be easily lured – not even fooled because they kind of beg, 'We want to be lured, please; paint us a beautiful picture, and we will be glad.'"<sup>365</sup>

Those observations are consistent with statistics of Russian film distribution industry (that includes Ukraine's market as well). As testified by a major expert,

"out of all kinds of Hollywood productions, the Russian viewer invariably chooses only fairy-tales. Likewise, all successful domestic films fall into that category as well. The highest indices of TV viewership belong to [Soviet films] that conserved the image of the world where one was not responsible for anything, did not control his fate, nor was threatened by the need to make choices. All the above is highly valued by today's audience. The Russian viewers accurately recognize -- and adamantly reject -- any attempt to talk to them about serious things, even in a light manner. Any authenticity, even in a varnish coating, is repugnant to them."<sup>366</sup>

Distrust in formal institutions – a trait of the "cunning behavior" -- breeds corruption and renders democracy meaningless. The majority of Russians believe that a bribe is inevitable when you deal with a government official. By the same token, Russians do not see elections as a form of political participation and representation. Rather, they feel that it is "a ritual of approval for those who already

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<sup>365</sup> Yury Levada. "Public Lecture on Polit.Ru" delivered on April 15, 2004.

URL: <http://polit.ru/article/2004/04/15/levada/>

<sup>366</sup> Aleksandr Rodniansky. "Russian and Ukrainians Do Not Want To See Real Life On the Screen. URL:

[http://censor.net.ua/resonance/201243/rossiyane\\_i\\_ukraintsy\\_ne\\_hotyat\\_videt\\_realnost\\_na\\_ekrane](http://censor.net.ua/resonance/201243/rossiyane_i_ukraintsy_ne_hotyat_videt_realnost_na_ekrane)

have the power; a kind of state ceremony.”<sup>367</sup> Such distrust appears to be overwhelming: even police, both in Russia and Ukraine, earns less than 10% of public trust.<sup>368</sup>

Another often discussed manifestation of post-Soviet doublethink is self-censorship. Russian intellectuals of the older generation point out that young media professionals who grew up in post-Soviet times are not any freer than their parents. They demonstrate “a visible effect of self-censorship and self-suppression. They are scared of what is inside them -- they know very precisely what is not allowed.”<sup>369</sup> A Russian TV critic explains that in Soviet times people used to have “a delicate sense about what you can say and what you cannot.” It was “a unique feeling, akin to ‘the party instinct’ – nobody was trained in it, but everybody had it.” He observes that young Russian TV entertainers “have a perfect command of that sense and camouflage it more skillfully than their Soviet predecessors. It is a great skill, and a philosophy of its kind.”<sup>370</sup>

Post-Soviet societies are also characterized as “a mecca of conspiracy theorists” because there are millions whose minds are captivated with conspiracism, and political leaders themselves provide an ample supply of sensational conspiracy

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<sup>367</sup> Lev Gudkov in *Novaya Gazeta*, October 20, 2010. URL: <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/politics/1210.html>.

<sup>368</sup> In March 2013, public trust to the police was rated at 7% in Russia (according to the Levada Center survey) and 9% in Ukraine (according to the survey by the Institute of Sociology of Ukraine’s Academy of Science).

<sup>369</sup> Sergei Parkhomenko in a round table at Liberal Mission Fund (Moscow), October 26, 2010. URL: <http://liberal.ru/articles/4916>

<sup>370</sup> Andrei Arkhangelsky in *Novaia Gazeta*, January 12, 2001.

revelations.<sup>371</sup> An important reason for such proliferation of conspiracy theories is that the character of politics in those countries is “competitive but non-transparent”.<sup>372</sup> But it is also true that conspiracy theories “appear to make sense out of a world that is otherwise confusing – and in an appealingly simple way.”<sup>373</sup> Conspiracy theories perfectly fit the post-Soviet atmosphere of institutional distrust, fuzzy norms, and universal prevarication combined with infantile irrationality. Common sense – “the best remedy against the paranoia of conspiracies”<sup>374</sup>—does not work well in that environment.

The “ambivalent and ambiguous” post-Soviet mind appears inclined to sudden “twists and turns” of orientations.<sup>375</sup> Therefore, maintains a popular Russian columnist, even as people vote for Putin or Medvedev, “their willingness and desire to support the authorities is combined in their souls with deep hatred of the authorities, and readiness to take up the peg and go destroy them.”<sup>376</sup> The same point is made by Yury Levada who notes that in the post-Soviet doublethink,

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<sup>371</sup> Mikhail Dubiniansky. The Truth Is Out There – Conspirology, Ukrainian Style. *Ukrainska Pravda*, December 10, 2007. There are numerous examples of the use of conspiracism in Ukrainian and Russian politics. One of the most famous among them was the claim that participants of Orange Revolution rallies had been eating oranges injected with narcotic drugs from the CIA.

<sup>372</sup> Dubiniansky, *ibid.*

<sup>373</sup> Barkun, Michael. *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*. University of California Press, 2003.

<sup>374</sup> Dubiniansky, *ibid.*

<sup>375</sup> Yury Levada. “Homo Praevaricatus...”, p. 320.

<sup>376</sup> Leonid Mlechin. Interview to UNIAN, June 21, 2010. URL: <http://www.unian.ua/news/382851-leonid-mlechin-gotovnist-pidtrimati-vladu-poednuetsya-v-dushi-rosiyanina-z-glibokoyu-nenavistyu-do-neji.html>

“demonstrative excitement is always combined with covert distrust and dark envy.”<sup>377</sup>

The post-Soviet mind is driven not only by external informational inputs, but also, significantly, “is whipped up from within, through mechanisms of self-delusion” that have “minimal connection to real experience or rational assessment.”<sup>378</sup> It is “a mind in a state of mess” filled with “contradictory notions, beliefs, and myths” which guide the post-Soviet people’s behavior.<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> Levada, *ibid.*

<sup>378</sup> Yury Levada, *ibid.*

<sup>379</sup> Leonid Mlechin. *Ibid.*

## **CHAPTER 4.**

### **DIMENSIONS OF POST-SOVIET DOUBLETHINK IN CONTEMPORARY UKRAINE**

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Doublethink as the condition of post-Soviet mass consciousness finds various manifestations in the political behavior of individuals and groups. It is reflected in institutional features of post-Soviet politics and societies, especially in a complicated relationship between formal and informal components of the institutional system. The following section briefly sketches diverse manifestations and influences of doublethink in the politics of post-Soviet Ukraine.

#### **4.1. Controversies of Collective Identity and Memory**

In March 1991, over 70% of Ukrainian voters approved Mikhail Gorbachev's proposal "to preserve the USSR as a renewed federation of equal sovereign republics." In the same referendum, nearly 82% of the voters endorsed the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine earlier adopted by the legislature – which declared Ukraine's independence in every aspect of government, from international relations and citizenship to the monetary system and taxes.<sup>380</sup> In December 1991, 92% of the voters supported Ukraine's Act of Declaration of Independence which prompted the dissolution of the USSR within days. However, public opinion surveys

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<sup>380</sup> URL: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration\\_of\\_State\\_Sovereignty\\_of\\_Ukraine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration_of_State_Sovereignty_of_Ukraine)

repeatedly conducted since 1993 show that nearly 50% of Ukrainians would not have voted in favor of independence again.<sup>381</sup>

Those numbers reflect, in part, the confusing character of the referenda questions.<sup>382</sup> But more importantly, they show the “ambiguous and ambivalent” character of the post-Soviet Ukrainian identity.<sup>383</sup> After Ukraine’s communist leadership under Leonid Kravchuk switched to “national communism” positions, the Ukrainian identity has been defined in terms of two conflicting narratives.

One is anti-imperial, anti-Russian, and, by extension, anti-Soviet. It treats contemporary Ukraine as “postcolonial” and “post-genocidal;” its greatest heroes are those who fought against the Russian and Soviet imperial oppression, from the great poet Taras Shevchenko to the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) commander Roman Shukhevych. That narrative cannot be fully accepted by the Ukrainians who define themselves in terms of “dual identity” as “both Ukrainian and Russian” and who constitute, by various estimates, from 27 to 35% of the nation<sup>384</sup> (in addition to

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<sup>381</sup> In a recent survey by Research&Branding Group, 47% said they would have supported the preservation of the USSR, and only 51% would have voted for the Act of Declaration of Independence again. Also, 54% agreed that “it would have been better if the USSR had been preserved.” (*Korrespondent.net*, March 16, 2011. URL: <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/1196638-opros-pochti-polovina-ukraincev-hotyat-nazad-v-sssr> )

<sup>382</sup> For example, the USSR referendum initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev combined two opposite concepts -- “preservation” and “renewal” – in one question: “Do you consider necessary the preservation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a renewed federation of equal sovereign republics in which the rights and freedom of an individual of any nationality will be fully guaranteed?” Asking that question in itself is an example of doublethink.

<sup>383</sup> As discussed in more detail above (section 1.1.e).

<sup>384</sup> “Ukrainian National Identity: The “Other Ukraine.” Kennan Institute lecture by Andrew Wilson, December 6, 1999.

another 25-30% comprised by ethnic Russians or complete Russophones).<sup>385</sup> Opponents of that narrative argue that it is factually inaccurate because many of the agents of Soviet “colonial oppression and genocide” were ethnic Ukrainians themselves. They also argue against the hero status of freedom fighters like Roman Shukhevych labeling them as Nazi German collaborators.

The flaws of that narrative, however, need to be understood in the context of its battling against the entrenched “Ukrainian Soviet” myth. This other narrative postulates “eternal brotherhood” of Russians and Ukrainians and emphasizes the achievements of socialist industrialization and modernization of Ukraine under the Soviet rule. Those who non-critically embrace this narrative are the most nostalgic for the Soviet times – but they demonstrate a “gap in historical memory” because those territories of Ukraine where the Soviet myth is most strongly entrenched are also those which suffered the most from the genocidal famine, or the Holodomor, in 1932-1933.<sup>386</sup> Over two thousand Lenin statues can still be found in Ukraine’s cities, towns and villages (with the exception of the provinces that had not been Sovietized until 1939), alongside with Soviet and communist toponyms – names of streets, neighborhoods, public buildings, etc. “Although the USSR died, it is metaphysically alive, like Lenin. We are still fixated

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<sup>385</sup> URL: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian\\_language\\_in\\_Ukraine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_language_in_Ukraine)

<sup>386</sup> This point was made by Levko Lukianenko, a veteran of the nationalist movement and subsequently a Ukrainian statesman, in an interview to Radio Free Europe – Radio Liberty on July 16, 2010.

### **Exhibit 1.4.1: Ambiguities of Ukraine's historical memory and identity.**

This collage taken from the Ukrainian intellectual periodical *Zerkalo Nedeli* reflects the Ukrainian mind's confusion about its history, identity, and future path. The elements featured in the collage include Russian, Polish, and Soviet symbols, figures of Lenin, Stalin, and Brezhnev (with Lenin showing direction into a cul-de-sac), and many clock faces apparently indicating a mix of times and epochs.





on it in what seems to be an endless ‘groundhog day,’” sarcastically remarks a young Ukrainian scholar.<sup>387</sup>

For nearly twenty years, Ukraine’s post-Soviet leaders were carrying out their “great project of amnesia: a more or less conscious, but consistently and successfully implemented program of actions and steps with the goal to forever forget, not to research, not to review, and not to rethink the recent Soviet past.”<sup>388</sup> Some attempts to change the situation during Viktor Yushchenko’s presidency did not lead to “rethinking and rejecting the Soviet legacies,” and today’s Ukraine is still taken over by “methastases of Sovietness.”<sup>389</sup> It remains “a ‘slack-baked state’ that was declared but still cannot decide how to treat its own recent past.”<sup>390</sup>

On the other hand, the “Soviet myth” of Ukraine’s history promotes amnesia in regard to events and heroes that do not fit in it, and replaces them with phony dates and names to celebrate. For instance, Ukrainians still fondly mark fake Soviet “anniversaries,”<sup>391</sup> but are poorly informed that many of the heroes of the Russian history were of Ukrainian origin, or that Ukrainians constituted nearly 50%

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<sup>387</sup> Pavlo Solodko. The Union Is Looking At You. *Ukrainska Pravda*, December 8, 2010.

<sup>388</sup> This phrase belongs to George G. Grabowicz, a scholar of Ukraine at Harvard University; it is quoted here from the article by Yury Shapoval in *Zerkalo Nedeli* dated December 16, 2000, in translation from Russian.

<sup>389</sup> Yury Sobolev. The Soviet Legacy of Ukraine. *Zerkalo Nedeli*, August 19, 2011 (in Russian).

<sup>390</sup> Yury Shapoval, *ibid.*

<sup>391</sup> E.g. former Soviet Army Day became Fatherland Defenders’ Day. It is observed on February 23, based on a Soviet myth about a “battle victory” of the Red Army – which in reality never took place. More in: Svetlana Kabachinskaya. Inoculation of Amnesia. *Zerkalo Nedeli*, February 17, 2012 (in Russian).

of the Gulag inmates – three times above the proportion of Ukrainians in the Soviet population.<sup>392</sup>

The “Soviet” Ukrainian narrative is uncomfortable in dealing with any heroes – including freedom fighters, intellectuals, or human rights activists – who had been victims of the Soviet regime.<sup>393</sup> It is even more uncomfortable with recognizing as a hero anyone who had been an active opponent of the Soviet regime. Thus, the national legislature has never agreed to give official status of World War II veterans to former UPA combatants (although pertaining privileges were granted to them by several province legislatures). And by the same token, official tributes paid to Mykhailo Hrushevskyi and Symon Petliura (heads of the independent Ukrainian state who lost in the civil war to the Bolshevik Red Army in 1919-1920) are perceived as “hypocrisy and falseness” as long as more hearty reverence is paid to remaining symbols of Soviet totalitarianism.<sup>394</sup>

Attempts to end the “conspiracy of amnesia” at the high official level were made by the end of Viktor Yushchenko presidency. He initiated national remembrance of the Holodomor and tributes to the warriors who fought against Bolsheviks for the independent Ukrainian People’s Republic in 1918-1919. He also

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<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

<sup>393</sup> As an example, Ukraine’s legislators willingly vote for resolutions to commemorate Soviet history dates such as a birthday of the former Communist Party chief Vladimir Shcherbitsky or an anniversary of Ukraine’s Comsomol. But they voted down a commemorative resolution for the centennial of the writer and poet Ivan Bagryanyi who had been a victim of Stalin’s purges in the 1930s and them lived in emigration after 1945.

<sup>394</sup> Viktor Rog. Returning of Memory (in Ukrainian). Published on Maidan.org.ua. April 28, 2005. URL: <http://maidan.org.ua/static/mai/1114693299.html>

conferred Hero of Ukraine titles on the controversial figures of UPA commander Roman Shukhevych and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists leader Stepan Bandera.

Those acts, however, did not facilitate consensus and reconciliation. Instead, collective identity and historical memory gained an overblown role as themes for voter mobilization in the rivalry of political leaders and parties. Neither Yushchenko, nor his rival and successor Viktor Yanukovych was able to get accepted as the leader of the whole country; each has been backed in one part of the country and rejected in the other. Themes of language (Ukrainian vs. Russian), World War II history, accession to NATO, and relations with Russia became “sacral idols” in this politics of “regional tribalism.”<sup>395</sup>

While UPA veterans are honored as heroes in Western provinces of Ukraine, memorials dedicated to “victims of the UPA” have been built in eastern Ukraine and in the Crimea. When courts in Donetsk ruled to nullify President Yushchenko’s decree about awarding Hero of Ukraine titles to Bandera and Shukhevych, local governments in the Western cities of Lviv, Ternopil, and Ivano-Frankivsk immediately proclaimed the two historical personalities as their “honorary citizens.” A commentator suggested that such an exchange of clashing official statements could be easily imagined between Teheran and Washington; but within

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<sup>395</sup> Mikhail Dubiniansky. The Country of Developed Tribalism. *Ukrainska Pravda*, July 7, 2009 (in Russian). The author explains “tribalism” as the practice when “people in power give preferences to their own tribe in matters of personnel, finance, and culture.”

one and the same country, it looked like “a complicated case of state schizophrenia.”<sup>396</sup>

Tribalist confrontations around themes of identity, history, and language in Ukraine appear increasingly ritualistic and irrational:

“A resident of Ternopil or Donetsk can hardly be free in his or her choice of priorities: in fact, they are determined by the local environment. The sense of belonging to ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ makes a Ukrainian citizen accept a pre-packaged set of cultural, historical, and political fetishes that often have no logical connection. Those are not views – those are tenets of faith. Accordingly, the opposite viewpoint is sacrilege, blasphemy, and a great insult.”<sup>397</sup>

But in the years that followed the Orange Revolution, this became the convenient tool of preference for Ukraine’s “top league” politicians in mobilizing their unsophisticated voters. Thus, supporters of “patriotic” and “liberal” views became mistakenly identified with a single ethno-cultural environment, and that not only reduced their support, but also deepened political tension and cleavages. The logic of that path is further radicalization and departure from substantive debate on issues of the economy and law:

“In this scenario, cultural consanguinity becomes the primary orientation marker for the citizens, whereas the ability to rebuff ‘the bad guys’ is valued as the greatest virtue. The winners become those who most diligently wave their red flags or their Bandera portraits [...] and extremists from both camps continuously nourish each other.”<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> Mikhailo Nichoha. Clash of Civilizations Within Ukraine. *Ukrainska Pravda*, June 11, 2010 (in Ukrainian).

<sup>397</sup> Mikhail Dubiniansky, *ibid.*

<sup>398</sup> Mikhail Dubiniansky. Recapitulation of Lesson Not Learned. *Ukrainska Pravda*,

A more sober view recognizes that such abuse of historical memory where “symbols dominate over reality” breeds confusion, volatile orientations, and duplicitous moral standards. Some young Ukrainians note that concepts of “good” and “bad” in historical memory should not be conflated with citizens’ value systems:

“Shukhevych or Bandera cannot be our symbols of liberal democratic Ukraine because they were neither liberals, nor democrats. By the same token, if the individual is more important than the state, We cannot consider Stalin ‘an effective manager.’ [...] The Swedish people do not organize state commemoration for Charles XII, nor do the French have pompous festivities for Napoleon [...] Those countries have moved away from the domination of state over an individual.”<sup>399</sup>

#### **4.2. Doublethink and Social Values**

However, Ukraine’s post-communist transition inevitably ties together the questions of identity and values. “European identity and values” is a subject of “romanticized” debate, in which many Ukrainians do not yet realize that liberal European values are rational and pragmatic, rather than romantic.<sup>400</sup>

At the time of the Orange Revolution, many Ukrainians seemed to be driven by an irrational hope “to wake up in the Brave New World” the morning after they chanted revolutionary slogans in Kiev’s central square. That faith in “European integration” as a magic recipe was akin to the Soviet tradition of “faith in

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<sup>399</sup> Kostiantyn Levin. Traumas of Historic Memory. *Ukrainska Pravda*, May 13, 2010.

<sup>400</sup> Mikhail Dubiniansky. “The Europe Which We Lost,” *Ukrainska Pravda*, July 9, 2010 (in Russian).

miracles.”<sup>401</sup> In the aftermath of those events, President Yushchenko’s “European integration” motto acquired likeness to “a mystic and magic mantra” that substituted systemic reforms based on European standards of governance.<sup>402</sup>

In Ukraine’s “European integration” debate, discussion of ideological values became replaced with a “tribal” fight between ethno-cultural orientations. As noted by Mikhail Dubiniansky, an insightful and widely quoted publicist, “in place of liberals and social democrats, we have competition between Lviv and Donetsk.”<sup>403</sup> The sides in those political battles “easily reincarnate from ardent libertarians into convinced socialists, and from fervent democrats into ‘a strong hand’ advocates.”<sup>404</sup> Dubiniansky points out that the Ukrainian society has avoided a clear analysis of its attitudes to the values of individual and economic freedoms. Voters prefer “an eclectic cocktail of mutually contradictory wishes spiced with abstract declarations about ‘justice’.” That ambiguous and confused mindset continues the tradition of late Soviet doublethink when “one and the same person would demand social equality while exposing the luxuries of nomenklatura but also dream about free enterprise and capitalism -- like the fairy double-headed animal pushmi-pullyu.”<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> As discussed above (section 1.3.b.) in regard to Mikhail Heller’s analysis of the “new Soviet man” paradigm.

<sup>402</sup> Mikhail Dubiniansky. “Turning Savage.” *Ukrainska Pravda*, March 11, 2011 (in Ukrainian).

<sup>403</sup> Mikhail Dubiniansky. “Etude in Postcolonial Colors.” *Ukrainska Pravda*, January 1, 2011.

<sup>404</sup> Mikhail Dubiniansky. “The Day After Tomorrow.” *Ukrainska Pravda*, March 25, 2011.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

Reflecting the voters' conceptual confusion, political opposition demands from the government freedom for entrepreneurs along with more social spending in welfare and subsidies. Likewise, those who criticize President Yanukovich for encroachment on civil liberties, also criticize him for a "more liberal" language policy, notes Dubiniansky. He reasons:

"One cannot sit in two chairs or travel by two roads at the same time. It is unrealistic to mix Keynesian economics and monetarism in one bottle while dreaming about a Roosevelt and a Reagan for Ukraine. It is silly to admire China's economic breakthrough and feel nostalgic for the social security of Soviet times. [Do we want] free market or government regulation? Personal freedoms or mandatory citizen upbringing? Those fundamental questions require straight and unequivocal answers."<sup>406</sup>

Perception of the state is another controversial theme that reveals the double-mindedness of the Ukrainian society. According to Dubiniansky, the prevailing frame is an incongruous mix of paternalistic expectations and anti-bureaucratic sentiment. The majority of citizens want the state to provide care and support in the forms of various funded programs. They also want the government to regulate the market and protect them from its adverse effects. At the same time, people revile "the bureaucrats" that "embezzle, steal, extort, and make problems for everyone." To resolve that problem, every new government wants to be given more powers, and "many Ukrainians are sincerely convinced that in order to defeat the dragon, they need a new dragon, only stronger and harsher."<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> Ibid.

<sup>407</sup> Mikhail Dubiniansky. The Discreet Charm of the Bureaucracy. *Ukrainska Pravda*, February 10, 2012.

#### **Exhibit 1.4.2: “Clash of civilizations” in Ukraine’s parliament?**

Regular and vicious altercations in the Supreme Rada, according to some experts, reflect the “tribalist” character of political competition in which “ethno-cultural markers” replaced ideological positions. Cultural features such as language acquire sacral symbolic meaning, while politics becomes increasingly irrational and savage.



A fight scene in the Supreme Rada of the VII Convocation (2013).





A fight scene in the Supreme Rada of the VI Convocation (2012).



A fight scene in the Supreme Rada of the V Convocation (2006).

It has been noted that post-Soviet people – including Ukrainians – show an apparent “personality split”: on the one hand, they feel “weary of being slaves”; on the other hand, they “hope for the advent of a wise master.” Voters’ sentiments inexplicably combine “hatred of the state as a tool of coercion and faith in the state as a remedy against troubles.” Even before the Orange Revolution, some suggested that the electoral success of Viktor Yushchenko was based on that factor: he was able to project the image of “benevolent ruler” (for which some legislators ironically nicknamed him “the messiah”).<sup>408</sup>

Ukrainians are aware of this duality, and many seem to think of it as their “unique curse”:

“We are a unique nation – with European geography and an Asiatic sense of life. Our “European aspirations” are another lie and fantasy. We give bribes and curse corruption; we hate our politicians, but we get glued to our TVs to listen to their empty rhetoric in the weekly talk show, and, most remarkably, we believe them again. And the morning after, we hate them again. We live as if in a kingdom of crooked mirrors where democratic and foundational values acquire grotesque reflections devoid of meaning. We are lead actors in a modern theater of the absurd. Our society, entangled in lies and fear, is unable to think and analyze.”<sup>409</sup>

The writer quoted above -- who is an entrepreneur and a local elected official -- notes that Ukraine’s biggest inconsistency with European standards is in the deep alienation between the individual and the state – because the individual is de-facto still subservient to the state, despite declarations of the opposite. For that reason, some commentators have used the image of an hourglass “with a very small top part”

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<sup>408</sup> Yulia Mostovaia and Sergei Rakhmanin. “Between Thunderbirds and Penguins.” *Zerkalo Nedeli*, February 11, 2001 (in Russian).

<sup>409</sup> Dmitry Spivak. “Ukraine as a Country of Paradoxes.” *Ukrainska Pravda*, November 1, 2011 (in Russian).

as a model of Ukraine's society – to emphasize the alienation between the bureaucracy and oligarchs at the top and the rest of the society at the bottom.<sup>410</sup> Most Ukrainians agree that those upper and lower segments of the society “exist as if in parallel worlds” with very conventional links between them. Many would agree that Benjamin Disraeli's famous characterization of the 19<sup>th</sup> century England is fully applicable to the Ukrainian society today: “two nations, who are not governed by the same laws, between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy, as if they were inhabitants of different planets.”<sup>411</sup>

Because of that, radical critics frequently refer to government as “the occupation regime.”<sup>412</sup> Such labels are consistent with low digits of public trust to government leaders and their offices.<sup>413</sup> But instead of organizing for political action against the perceived adversary, many Ukrainians prefer to wage their own “guerilla micro-wars” against “the system”: by operating in the shadow economy, by dodging the payment of “taxes and fees, as well as bribes and kickbacks,” by tampering with their utility meters, and even by forging various certificates or other documentation they are required to have.<sup>414</sup> The outcome looks like a war of “all against all”

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<sup>410</sup> One of the first to bring up this image was Richard Rose, who was then quoted by Hans van Zon in *Political Economy of Independent Ukraine* (Palgrave, 2000).

<sup>411</sup> The parallel was suggested in: Dmitry Yakubin. “Ukraine and Ukraine.” *Ukrainska Pravda*, November 16, 2011.

<sup>412</sup> E.g. “the occupational regime of Yanukovych is trying to turn into an open dictatorship.” URL: <http://portal.lviv.ua/news/2013/03/14/120448.html>

<sup>413</sup> According to a 2009 survey, very few respondents agreed that their interests were represented by the president (4%), the parliament (2%), the government (3%), or any individual political party (0-8%). UNIAN News, September 19, 2009.

<sup>414</sup> Dmytro Sinchenko. The Newest Guerilla. *Ukrainska Pravda*, October 11, 2011 (in Ukrainian).

because not only “the government fools the people, and the people fool the government” -- in addition, Ukrainians just as well “fool one another and fool themselves,” and lying is no longer considered amoral because it became “the norm of life: if you don’t lie, you cannot live.”<sup>415</sup>

### **4.3. Divergence between Formal Laws and Informal Rules**

A Ukrainian philosopher famously said: “Corruption is what you personally do not take part in.”<sup>416</sup> That sad joke implies the enormous scale of the phenomenon in Ukraine, wherefore some people suggest that the term itself – if it is understood as breaking of rules – becomes misleading. Corrupt behavior – bribery, kickbacks, extortion, stealing, and cronyism – is seen as the duplicitous norm and may arguably be called an established informal institution of post-Soviet societies.

Its prevalence can be inferred from the rule formulated a long time ago by Saltykov-Shchedrin: “the severity of Russian laws is alleviated by the lack of obligation to fulfill them.”<sup>417</sup> When the state is alienated from the people, and its laws and regulations are too hard to comply with, corruption becomes “the opiate of the masses” and “the heart of a heartless world,” explains Mikhail Dubiniansky; and the stronger the alienation, the more demand for the remedy that brings relief. This is

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<sup>415</sup> Andriy Tsygankov. Let Us Stop Lying and Believing Lies. *UNIAN* opinion column, October 27, 2011 (in Ukrainian). URL: <http://www.unian.ua/news/464808-davayte-perestanemo-brehati-i-viriti-brehni.html>

<sup>416</sup> Dmitry Vydrin, multiply quoted. E.g. *Ukrainska Pravda*, July 26, 2007.

<sup>417</sup> Discussed in more detail above (section 1.2.b).

why post-Soviet corruption “is not an alien tumor that the Ukrainian society would try to exfoliate; rather it is a service in mass demand;” in essence, it is “the buffer between Kafkaesque rules and the objective reality.”<sup>418</sup>

Not surprisingly, many begin to feel that “it becomes non-competitive to live by the law.” Everyone wants to find some “niche for survival” in the shadow sector -- which may embrace, by some estimates, “up to 80% of everything that people do.”<sup>419</sup> It is also estimated that up to 90% of Ukrainians receive at least a part of their income in tax-evading forms.<sup>420</sup>

Vast shadow economy is based on an underlying “informal social contract.” It is a tacit understanding that the upper class is allowed “to capture the state,” while the lower class is allowed to make its living “in the shadow.”<sup>421</sup> A network of “parallel markets” described by Guy Sorman, as the epitome of Soviet “double thinking, double acting, and double morals”<sup>422</sup> continues to operate in post-Soviet Ukraine: people commonly bring cash as “gratitude” for services officially considered free -- for instance, to public school teachers and to public clinics physicians, because “everybody knows that their official salary is too low to survive.”

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<sup>418</sup> Mikhail Dubiniansky. The Opiate of the Masses. *Ukrainska Pravda*, April 8, 2011.

<sup>419</sup> Valentyn Tkach in *Ukrainska Pravda*, March 22, 2012.

<sup>420</sup> *Ukrainska Pravda*, June 15, 2010.

<sup>421</sup> Irina Pogorelova. A Shadow Social Contract. *Ukrainska Pravda*, December 15, 2010

<sup>422</sup> See section 1.3.b.

<sup>423</sup> Yuri Lukanov in *Ukrainska Pravda*, July 19, 2010.

By the same token, cash “gratitude” becomes necessary when one needs to get a service from a government official – such as a registration, a passport, or anything else. According to one study, 69% of respondents admitted that they “gave cash or gifts” for getting served by authorized office holders.<sup>424</sup> Many of them apparently would not even consider that a bribe.

Even more striking than mass bribery by front-line officers is the permeating system of “chain corruption”: according to reliable testimonies, bribes collected by lower level officers – such as traffic police or customs inspectors – are normally shared with their supervisors and go up the chain of command all the way to the top.<sup>425</sup> It is not uncommon to hear about extortion of “shadow payments” from lower-ranking officials by their supervisors<sup>426</sup> which, in all appearance, comprise a corruption pyramid, similar in nature to the “cotton affair” pyramid of Soviet times.<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> Yury Lukanov, *ibid.*

<sup>425</sup> The “omerta code” in regard to such organized criminal chains became broken in several instances. One was the high profile affair of judge Ihor Zvarych arrested for bribery in 2008. Another notable testimony was made in a recent interview by Hennady Moskal, a former Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs where he admitted that “informal payments are collected from the bottom to the top” in every directorate of the police, and “so called high-profile arrests for bribery only happen with those who took money bid did not share it with his superiors.”

*Zerkalo Nedeli*, February 15, 2013.

<sup>426</sup> “Hearsay” and “off the record” stories about such system were often shared with this writer in his interviews with Ukrainian citizens, including those in government service. They are corroborated by revealed criminal cases about extortion inside government agencies; e.g. “Division Table, or How To Make Corruption,” *Ukrainska Pravda*, April 10, 2012.

<sup>427</sup> Discussed in more detailed above (section 1.3.b).

A young practicing lawyer sadly observes that “the society can no longer do without lies and falseness in any aspect of its life,” but he sees the crux of the problem in the court system corrupted by systemic lies. He maintains that

“Only in exceptional cases can one find truth and rule of law in a court of justice. We are told lies that the rule of law and the equality of all before the court are the norm; and we pretend to believe it, as if we do not know how court impartiality is actually “financed,” and as if we do not know the standards of living of our judges – who compete in luxury and impunity only with chiefs of police.”<sup>428</sup>

Corruption in high places is the most visible and arguably the biggest in scope. By various estimates, from 15 to 25% of government expenditures are “stolen” each year – as admitted by President Yanukovich and confirmed by independent journalistic investigations.<sup>429</sup> However, striking facts of corrupt deals, despite previously absent publicity, do not result in effectual public outrage and do not lead to high-level resignations.<sup>430</sup> Investigative journalists bitterly remark:

“The government has done everything to make journalistic voyeurism not only enjoyable, but also easy to implement. At last, no one is hiding anywhere. Everything is in sight. What used to be shameful is now the subject of vanity. “Corrupt schemes” became simplified to the level of primary school. In order to conduct high-profile

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<sup>428</sup> Ibid.

<sup>429</sup> President Yanukovich was quoted as saying that nearly \$8 billion (about 15% of the government total expenditures) gets stolen each year. A tentative estimate calculated by journalists comprised close to \$15 billion in 2011, or nearly 25% of all expenditures. Aleksei Shalaisky and Victor Tregubov. Top Seven Schemes Of Emptying Budget. *Zerkalo Nedeli*, December 29, 2011.

<sup>430</sup> One of the best documented and most shocking scandals concerned the purchase of an oil-drilling platform by the government of Ukraine from a Norwegian corporation via a dummy company in Latvia, with a price cap of \$150 million, in a falsified procurement tender (*Zerkalo Nedeli*, May 27, 2011, with follow-up stories). Its investigation, however, resulted only in a presidential “reprimand” to the Minister of Energy.

investigations, it is enough to get into the internet for half an hour or simply to turn on your TV.”<sup>431</sup>

This short collection of facts and opinions sketches a paradoxical relationship between formal law and informal rules in today’s Ukrainian society. Law maintains its role as a tool of “blackmail”<sup>432</sup> and is handy in the administration of “selective justice.”<sup>433</sup> Like in the Soviet system, it sets “the interest of the state” against interests of the people, and complying with it remains as burdensome as it used to be for the “Soviet man” to meet the system’s ideological requirements.<sup>434</sup> Duplicitous attitude to law in post-Soviet societies continues the Soviet tradition of tacit understanding that “what matters is not law, but the rules of conduct.”<sup>435</sup> It is perpetuated by the “mental software” of doublethink inherited from the Soviet past.

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<sup>431</sup> Aleksei Shalaisky and Victor Tregubov in *Zerkalo Nedeli*, December 29, 2011.

<sup>432</sup> As discussed by Keith Darden, quoted above in section 1.1.e.

<sup>433</sup> Criminal prosecution of former Prime Minister and presidential candidate Yulia Tymoshenko is now internationally recognized as an instance of “selective justice,” but it reflects a long-standing tradition that has been ingrained in the criminal justice system.

<sup>434</sup> Private entrepreneurs operating in Ukraine unanimously and emphatically agree that it is impossible to do business there without formal violations of the law at every step.

<sup>435</sup> Vladimir Voinovich. *The Anti-Soviet Soviet Union*, quoted earlier in Section 1.3.b.



**PART TWO. PSEUDO-MODERNITY  
AND POST-SOVIET INSTITUTIONS:  
POLITICAL PARTIES AND LEADERSHIP  
IN UKRAINE**

**CHAPTER 5.**  
**POLITICAL PARTIES**  
**IN OLD AND NEW DEMOCRACIES**

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**5.1. Democracy and Political Parties**

Political parties are deemed indispensable for democracy. Seymour Martin Lipset clearly conveyed this argument by underscoring institutionalized party competition as the central concept in his “minimalist definition of democracy.”<sup>436</sup> He reminds us that “political parties created democracy and that modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties.”<sup>437</sup>

In modern democracies, political parties commonly perform a number of functions. They recruit and nominate political candidates. Nomination of candidates is closely linked with voter mobilization and motivation, hence parties enhance mass participation in politics. Further, parties frame electoral choices in relation to policy issues and thus they facilitate policy debates and the formulation of policies. Also, parties aggregate diverse group interests into political coalitions. Last but not least, parties play a crucial role in social integration as they enable citizens to take part in the political process.<sup>438</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset. The Indispensability of Political Parties. *Journal of Democracy*, 11(1), 2000, p. 47.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid. Original quotation belongs to E.E. Schattschneider.

<sup>438</sup> This is a summary of the analysis of party functions presented by Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond in *Political Parties and Democracy*, Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2001, pp. 7-9.

A long time ago, Alexis de Tocqueville asserted that political parties can be of two kinds: “those that emphasize ideology and those that emphasize interests.”<sup>439</sup> However, he noted, behind the ideology one will likely find “private interest, which always plays the chief part in political passions, more studiously veiled under the pretext of the public good.”<sup>440</sup>

Modern typologies of political parties are more elaborate and take into account their electoral strategies, social representation, principal objectives, and organizational capacities. Thus, scholars distinguish “organizationally thick” and “organizationally thin” parties; programmatic and pragmatic parties; etc. Gunther and Diamond propose to differentiate between five major types of parties in regard to their goals and structure: a) elite-based parties; b) mass-based parties; c) ethnicity-based parties; d) electoralist parties; e) movement parties.<sup>441</sup>

Elite-based parties emerged in old democracies when suffrage was significantly limited; with the expansion of the suffrage and socio-economic modernization, they largely lost electoral effectiveness. A later version of that type of parties is called clientelistic party: a confederation of notables organizing an exchange of personalistic favors as a principal tool for electoral mobilization of mass voters. “Political machines” in big North American cities and in rural areas of Southern Europe and Latin America at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were prominent examples of that type of parties.

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<sup>439</sup> In Seymour Martin Lipset’s formulation (ibid., p. 48).

<sup>440</sup> Quoted from ibid.

<sup>441</sup> Gunther and Diamond, ibid., pp. 9-30.

Mass-based parties are characterized by big numbers of dues-paying members who take part in party affairs not limited to elections only. Such parties emerged in Europe, predominantly with the political mobilization of the working class. Other variations of mass-based parties are pluralist nationalist parties or religious parties (that can be either denomination-based or fundamentalist).

Ethnicity-based parties are typically less extensive and less organized than mass-based parties. Parties of that type make no effort to aggregate interests beyond the ethnic group. But they sometimes form coalitions or alliances in the form of a “congress party.”

Electoralist parties are organizationally thin outside the election time, but they work very actively to mobilize voters during elections and rely heavily on campaign professionals. Their frequent variety is known as the “catch-all party” – it is characterized by shallow organization, superficial and vague ideology, and a strong focus on elections. Another variety of electoralist parties is defined as “programmatic;” in contrast to “catch-all” parties, they have a more coherent ideological agenda and a narrower, more clearly defined social base. A third type of electoralist parties, according to Gunther and Diamond, is the “personalistic” party which “only weakly performs the functions of parties.”<sup>442</sup>

Movement parties are organizations that “straddle the conceptual space between ‘party’ and ‘movement’” – such as Greens or Libertarians in some West European countries.<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

It is commonly noted that support for political parties in modern democracies has declined. They apparently fail to meet the citizens' functional demands of political representation. Party politicians are increasingly perceived as self-serving, unresponsive, and unaccountable, with aggravating tensions between party leaders and followers.<sup>444</sup> Scandals concerning campaign funds reflect flaws in the system of party finance.

Historically specific mass party may no longer be the norm in today's democracies, and this indicates the decline of political parties as an institution. Scholars note "the ever more-pronounced separation of the representative and the institutional roles of the party."<sup>445</sup> However, those trends can also be interpreted as "adaptation rather than degeneration." Although there are other kinds of actors that compete with parties in some of their functions, there are still no "real alternatives" to parties as the foundation of democracy. However, a question can be asked hypothetically: if parties ultimately fail to serve as the agent of political and institutional integration, what would be the fate of democracy?<sup>446</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> Ibid., pp. 29-30.

<sup>444</sup> "Political Parties and Democracy...", pp. x-xiv.

<sup>445</sup> Stefano Bartolini and Peter Mair. *Challenges to Contemporary Political Parties. Political Parties and Democracy...*, p. 337.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid., pp. 341-342.

## **5.2. Political Parties After Communism**

In the opinion of some scholars, the processes of democratization and party development in post-communist countries have more in common with party development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe than with similar processes in new democracies elsewhere in the world – because they had to be started “from scratch.”

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Institutionalized multi-party systems have emerged in those East European countries which had democratic experience prior to their communist regimes. After an initial “messy period” of transition, they developed a relative stability of voter political orientations and electoral cleavages.<sup>448</sup> This facilitated the institutionalization of a number of “programmatic” type parties (e.g. the Democratic Union in Poland, the Federation of Young Democrats – Hungarian Civic Party, the Czech Social Democratic Party, and others). Programmatic parties are based on a higher mode of linkage building than personalistic or clientelistic parties; they assume the presence of sufficiently demanding followers who emphasize accountability and responsiveness.<sup>449</sup>

Stalled party development in post-Soviet countries (with the exception of the Baltic states) has been considered puzzling. It was noted for instance that since

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<sup>447</sup> Paul Lewis. p. 32 – 40.

<sup>448</sup> Tomas Kostelecky. *Political Parties After Communism*. Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2002.

<sup>449</sup> Herbert Kitchelt. Divergent Paths of Post-Communist Democracies. *Political Parties and Democracy...*, pp. 299-302. .

post-Soviet states typically have strong presidential systems, they would be expected to develop “two broad alliances or parties, as in the United States” – because a presidential system design is encouraging for such development.<sup>450</sup> But without a stable and ideologically coherent party system, the two most important post-Soviet states – Russia and Ukraine – remain “extremely shaky polities” whose rulers “defend their claim to power as those in the postcolonial nations once did, in the language of leftist or egalitarian ideologies.”<sup>451</sup>

Post-Soviet political parties are predominantly personalistic and “fabricated by small groups of party-builders,” with very weak linkage to citizens. Some maintain that newly formed post-Soviet parties “are similar to newly formed parties in the West, the parties that have arisen recently or are arising before our eyes” – so their post-Soviet development reflects the global trend towards postmodern, non-ideological, and electoralist parties.<sup>452</sup>

The claim about the “normalcy” of post-Soviet parties is seriously challenged by Andrew Wilson.<sup>453</sup> He argues against a traditional approach to the study of post-Soviet politics which assumes that visible manifestations of conflict reflect genuine social cleavages. Wilson discusses political collisions in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus as “theater designed to confuse and deceive the electorate rather

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<sup>450</sup> Martin Seymour Lipset, *ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>452</sup> Susanna Pshizova. *Party-Building in Post-Soviet Space: Between Imitation and Simulation. Political Parties in Post-Soviet Space.* Praeger, 2005.

<sup>453</sup> Andrew Wilson. *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World.* Yale University Press, 2005.

than to represent real social actors.”<sup>454</sup> He emphasizes the role of “political technologists” (also known as “political marketers” and “consulting firms”) that are hidden behind parties and politicians while they organize the whole electoral process.

According to critics, Wilson’s work “stands as a watershed in the study of post-Soviet politics and establishes a new research imperative to explore the limitations and scope of the virtual political space.”<sup>455</sup> They also note some questions that stem from Wilson’s work and need to be answered further. One of them is about the political interests behind the creators of virtuality: who are those actors and what ultimately drives them? Likewise, his work calls for an examination of voting behavior – in order to “reintroduce the voter into the equation” of virtual politics.

### **5.3. The Puzzle of Post-Soviet “Parties in Translation.”**

Post-Soviet political parties are a perfect example of a transplanted institution. Under the Soviet system, political parties were banned from 1918; the “Communist Party of the Soviet Union” cannot be viewed as a political party in the

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<sup>454</sup> Andrew Konitzer and Jessica Bufford. *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 51 (2-3), 2009.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid.



traditional sense of that word – it was the backbone of dictatorial state, an all-permeating structure of governance and control.<sup>456</sup>

Democratization of the Soviet Union was driven by “the ambition to duplicate attractive Western patterns,” which produced the emergence of multiple political parties as a “pattern” deemed indispensable in a Western-style democracy.<sup>457</sup> But in the majority of former Soviet states, this institution is believed to have been artificially implanted rather than naturally emerged. Their performance raises questions about the “traveling capacity of borrowed concepts.” When a concept is borrowed from established democracies to “democratizing” countries, how does a borrowed form correlate with its content?<sup>458</sup> What becomes of the transferred institution in a foreign social and cultural context?

A German diplomat stationed in Ukraine observed that some seemingly universal political concepts were actually creating communicative confusion between German and Ukrainian interlocutors – because the meanings of those terms were rooted in one’s “political tradition and mentality.”<sup>459</sup> He named the word “party” among the most confusing in that problematic lexicon.

In Western parliamentary tradition, a party is a “driving belt that picks up and unifies the opinion and will of the public, and then converts it into practical

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<sup>456</sup> A modern writer wittily remarked that the same style of politics was shared by “royal courts and Communist Central Committees” -- and neither of them was about “party politics” (*Ukrainska Pravda*, July 17, 2012).

<sup>457</sup> Pshizova, p. 211.

<sup>458</sup> Kulik, p.4-6.

<sup>459</sup> Thomas Lenk. East-West Language Confusion: Notes of an Observer from Germany. *Zerkalo Nedeli*, July 5, 2003. (In Russian).

policies.” This understanding implies that parties gain their legitimacy from voters’ trust that is based in grassroots networks with broad involvement of volunteers. From that perspective, “a party cannot be an artificially designed project created by public relations specialists... One cannot sell a party like a laundry detergent.”<sup>460</sup>

However, post-Soviet parties are typically described as simulacra,<sup>461</sup> “virtual avatars” produced by “party designers,”<sup>462</sup> “tadpoles” without bodies, “trademarks for electoral promotion”.<sup>463</sup> They operate by using hired personnel (most recently, even for “mass protest” rallies), and consulting firms. Those parties are essentially like business ventures – they can be owned, sold and rebranded; likewise, legislators elected on a certain party ticket frequently switch their party identification. At the same time, all those parties barely reflect really existing social cleavages, with the exception of the parties that are ethnically-based.<sup>464</sup>

In his profound study of the party system in Russia<sup>465</sup>, Henry Hale observes that Russia’s parties can be considered both strong and weak at the same time. Addressing this puzzle of “stalled party development,” he resorts to a “market explanation” model that views candidates as consumers of “electoral goods and services” supplied by parties (a public label, organizational support, reputation gain, etc.). Alternative providers of such service packages are “party substitutes” (e.g.

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<sup>460</sup> Ibid.

<sup>461</sup> Kulik, p. 36.

<sup>462</sup> Andrew Wilson. *Virtual Politics. Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World.*” p. 39.

<sup>463</sup> Pshizova, p. 213.

<sup>464</sup> Pshizova, p. 214.

<sup>465</sup> Henry Hale. *Why Not Parties in Russia?* Cambridge University Press, 2006.

“regional political machines”), that often appear more competitive than parties in the “electoral market” due to “Russia’s patrimonial communist legacy” and the power of the executive branch “to regulate the market.”<sup>466</sup>

Looking from a different methodological standpoint, Anatoly Kulik arrives at similar conclusions. He emphasizes that Russian parties as well as the legislature (the Duma) have very little power, formal and informal, as compared to the executive branch (the Kremlin) which fully controls the regional authorities, radio and television, financial flows and the distribution of resources. Therefore, he defines the *raison d’être* of political parties in post-Soviet Russia as survival via securing parliamentary status (which provides access to some administrative, financial, informational and other resources). At the same time, for “the Kremlin” -- i.e. the ruling power – political parties are “simulacra of democracy” needed to legitimize the regime.<sup>467</sup>

All in all, party building in the post-Soviet space can be viewed as a process “between imitation and simulation.” Those newly developing parties differ from traditional political parties of old democracies of the past, as well as from contemporary parties of liberal democracies today. The normative pattern they claim to represent “assumes the character of a myth.”<sup>468</sup> While post-Soviet party politics is “underresearched and undertheorized,”<sup>469</sup> it remains to be seen whether the

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<sup>466</sup> Ibid., pp. 197-198.

<sup>467</sup> Anatoly Kulik. “Political Parties in Post-Soviet Russia: An Agent of Democratic Transformation? *Political Parties in Post-Soviet Space*, pp. 13-37.

<sup>468</sup> Pshizova, *ibid.*, pp. 216-217.

<sup>469</sup> Henry Hale, *ibid.*, p. 8.

‘simulacra of democracy’ will develop into real mass-based parties, and whether democracy can consolidate there without such genuine political parties.

**CHAPTER 6.**  
**UKRAINE’S POLITICAL PARTIES:**  
**FROM A “PARTY OF POWER”**  
**TO “PLURALISM OF CLANS”**

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**6.1. The “Party of Power” from 1991 to Present**

The Soviet regime terminated political parties as an institution within the first few months of its rule.<sup>470</sup> As a result, the institution of political parties was totally discontinued for more than seventy years. The single political organization that remained, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (formerly the Russian Communist Party of the Bolsheviks) – the organization that actually ruled the country until August 1991 – can hardly be considered a typological variation of that institution.<sup>471</sup>

The CPSU was the backbone of an ideocratic state; its function was to exercise power, and its structure fully reflected that function. It was organized as a hierarchy of ruling bodies in each administrative unit of the country’s territory (town, city, county, etc.). The party office of the territory oversaw all activity within its

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<sup>470</sup> From the moment of the takeover in November 1917 till July 1918, the Bolsheviks were in a “ruling coalition” with the party of Left Revolutionary Socialists. The coalition was formally disbanded by July 10, 1918, and the Bolsheviks remained the single ruling party of Russia, subsequently the Soviet Union. That put an end to party politics in the Soviet system until 1990.

<sup>471</sup> However, there are attempts to include “Leninist” parties in a comprehensive typology of political parties: Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond. *Types and Functions of Parties. Political Parties and Democracy*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, pp. 3-39.

boundaries; accordingly, party offices comprised departments for overseeing industry, agriculture, schools, law enforcement agencies, etc. Offices of the state were no more than “external trimming” on the surface of the ruling structure of the CPSU.<sup>472</sup>

Moreover, even the division of large cities and provinces into administrative districts was based on the jurisdiction of party offices rather than on the number of residents: as an example, the city of Leningrad (now St.Petersburg) was divided into 24 administrative districts where the number of residents varied from 80 to 500 thousand per district; but each had a more or less equal CPSU membership.<sup>473</sup>

CPSU offices, most importantly, controlled the selection, appointments and performance of the nomenklatura, i.e. of all officials and managers in positions of power within their territorial boundaries. The nomenklatura – the new ruling class of the Soviet system – was tightly organized around the CPSU offices. After the CPSU was disbanded in August 1991,<sup>474</sup> the informal network of the nomenklatura remained in place. It became commonly referred to as “the party of power.”<sup>475</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> As discussed by Anatoly Sobchak in “*Once upon a time there lived a Communist party*” (in Russian: Zhyla-byla Kommunisticheskaia partia), chapter 5.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid.

<sup>474</sup> In the aftermath of the attempted by CPSU “hardliners,” President of Russia Boris Yeltsin issued a decree disbanding the CPSU in Russia; his act was followed in other republics of the USSR.

<sup>475</sup> William Green Miller, a former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine and subsequently a researcher at the Kennan Institute, believed that the concept of the informal “party of power” was “of key importance” for understanding the course of post-Soviet politics (Kennan Institute lecture, January 9, 2006).

The former nomenklatura was using its access to positions of power – in elected and administrative offices, as well as via informal crony connections – to pursue what Gaidar described as the natural course of history: from “collectively owning the state” to becoming private owners of formerly public assets.<sup>476</sup> Former apparatchiks were turning into business owners and elected officials “in one bottle,” as described by a Ukrainian commentator:

“When that became ‘permissible,’ local bosses started to privatize what they could: market places, grocery stores, canteens and coffee shops. Later came public non-residential buildings, even some nursery schools, libraries, and gyms. In the meantime, bosses in higher levels were privatizing big state assets. Then the newly made entrepreneurs ‘of nomenklatura pedigree’ would run for elected offices of government and once again occupy the seats of executive authority. Such was the ‘natural cycle’ of our ‘salt of the earth’ and their money in post-Soviet politics.”<sup>477</sup>

Despite the fact that there already existed dozens of registered political parties,<sup>478</sup> the majority in Ukraine’s Supreme Rada, as well as in subnational legislatures and local councils until late 1990s was comprised by formally non-affiliated legislators who belonged to the “party of power.” Collectively they were described as “the swamp” – an amorphous group with very vague notions about the desired social goals. “Those people were ready to do obediently what the superiors told them, but not out of conviction, only out of their private self-interest. [...] The

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<sup>476</sup> Gaidar, *State and Evolution*; Discussed in more detail in section 1.3.b.

<sup>477</sup> Kostyantyn Matvienko in *Ukrainska Pravda*, September 6, 2010.

<sup>478</sup> The total number of registered parties in Ukraine comprised: in 1990 – 1; in 1991 – 10, in 1992 – 17, in 1993 – 33, etc. Their number reached 200 in 2012. (Maria Karmazina. Do Parties Perform As Agents of democracy? *Zerkalo Nedeli*, January 13, 2012).

main goal of this new upper class was to get instantly rich by privatizing what used to belong to the state and then re-sell it with profit. Thus political power merged with economic domination, and this shaped the order that was later called the ‘oligarchic clan system,’” recalled former U.S. Ambassador William Green Miller.<sup>479</sup>

Consecutive presidents of Ukraine, starting with Leonid Kravchuk, tried more than once to establish a strong pro-government party and thus to equip the amorphous “party of power” with a structured institutional frame. The first of those attempts dates back to 1992 when President Kravchuk initiated the establishment of an inter-party association named the Congress of National Democratic Forces. However, its influence was limited, and it collapsed with the electoral defeat of the incumbent president in 1994 (which was a rare incidence in the post-Soviet space).

Leonid Kuchma’s attempt in formal consolidation of the party of power was somewhat more effective. He won the presidential election as a vaguely defined “opposition” candidate (after resigning from the Prime Minister’s position a year before the election). Kuchma was the first to mobilize gifted intellectuals of non-nomenklatura origin to lead his staff (such as Oleksandr Razumkov, Dmytri Vydrin and others) who created a less Soviet political style and attracted support from groups of liberal orientation.<sup>480</sup> His message was about “change” and “reform,” and he was

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<sup>479</sup> William Green Miller, *ibid.*

<sup>480</sup> None of those groups was very influential, but they represented the reformist and “pro-Western” part of society. Among them were the Party of Democratic Revival of Ukraine, the Union of Students of Ukraine, the New Wave association, and some others. Later, they merged into the presidential People’s Democratic Party joining with forces of pragmatic and ideologically amorphous orientation, but in less than



backed by a network of opposition candidates in local elections that were held simultaneously. That network was named the Inter-regional Bloc for Reforms.<sup>481</sup> Later, the support base of the IBR was somewhat restructured to form a more comprehensive pro-presidential party under the name of People's Democratic Party.

The PDP was the first incarnation of the amorphous “party of power” in a structured political party in Ukraine. It emerged at the time of rising authoritarian “superpresidentialism” of Leonid Kuchma, where administrative pressure, “kompromat,” and other tools of informal domination became the shadow side of everyday politics.<sup>482</sup> PDP became arguably the first among Ukraine's political parties to employ “the administrative resource” to build up its influence.<sup>483</sup> With 5% of the popular vote in 1998 parliamentary elections, it earned 19 legislative seats; but what with its leader Valery Pustovoitenko being the Prime Minister of Ukraine, seventy other legislators were persuaded to switch their party ID and join the PDP faction. Thus, PDP was able to muster 20% of the total number of legislators (the faction comprised 89 seats in 1999). However, as soon as Pustovoitenko lost the Prime Minister position, the party lost most of its influence, and the faction membership shrank to 15.

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two years the liberal wing of the PDP split off and joined the forces supporting the political ascent of Viktor Yushchenko.

<sup>481</sup> The name contained a message for unifying politically opposite regions of the country. At the same time, it was reminiscent of the famous reformist caucus in the last Soviet legislature – the Inter-regional Group, that was headed by Andrei Sakharov and Anatoly Sobchak.

<sup>482</sup> Andrew Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation*. Yale Univ. Press, 2000, Chapter 9.

<sup>483</sup> As pointed out by Karmazina, *bid*.

From William Green Miller's viewpoint, the "party of power" remained monolithic and intact despite the changing names of the political parties which took turns at the legislature's lead. In a four-year period between two parliamentary elections – from 1998 to 2002 – the number of party or faction membership switches exceeded the total number of legislators in the Supreme Rada. Many of them moved several times from one group to another; ten of the legislators made four or even five such moves within four years.<sup>484</sup> In Andrew Wilson's apt wording, it was a parade of "virtual politics, with a shifting kaleidoscope of clan groups, shadowy business, and old nomenklatura interests."<sup>485</sup>

While clans were gaining in economic assets and power, their competition for rent-seeking spoils increased. As the result, the grand architecture of Ukrainian politics evolved towards a system of competing "oligarchic" groups, with President Kuchma positioned above as the supreme arbiter and, some also would say, as the *capo di tutti capi* or the Godfather.<sup>486</sup> Each group established control over a major political party as a tool of influence; thus several major parties evolved to become "political holdings" of business corporations.

The most conspicuous among them by the end of President Kuchma's administration was the United Social Democratic Party under the leadership of Viktor Medvedchuk. Its best electoral result was 6.27% of the vote in the parliamentary elections of 2002; but its shadow influence was disproportionately bigger while

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<sup>484</sup> Listed in *Ukrainska Pravda*, March 21, 2002.

<sup>485</sup> Andrew Wilson, *ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>486</sup> The point is made, for instance, by Steven Kotkin in his essay "Trashkanistan" (*The New Republic*, 2002) – as discussed above in Chapter 1 (section 1.1.e).

Viktor Medvedchuk served as the Chief of Staff for President Kuchma. Medvedchuk aggressively built up his network of influence under the party name. For instance, while his brother served as the chief of internal revenue administration in Lviv province, almost every local branch of the revenue administration was also a local USDP affiliation. Many elected officials were getting quiet recommendations to join USDP if they wanted to avoid a thorough audit of their business records.<sup>487</sup>

Such methods of “party politics” – bureaucratic build-up, administrative pressure, hypocrisy and fraud – indicate a continuity of style inherited by post-Soviet “parties of power” from the Soviet communist nomenklatura. Viktor Chernomyrdin, a former Prime Minister of Russia, famously made that point by saying: “Whatever organization we try to create, it comes out like a CPSU.” Over and over again, a post-Soviet “party of power” is exposed as “a group that pretends to be driven by common ideas, but is in fact united for priority access to the trough.” Understandably, such parties cannot rely on winning with the power of their ideas; they have to rely on “the administrative resource” – coercive pressure, electoral fraud and so on.<sup>488</sup>

Popular resentment against such methods -- and the political system they shaped -- became the driving force for the Orange Revolution. In that sense, it signified the post-Soviet “greengrocer’s redemption.”<sup>489</sup> However, attempts to

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<sup>487</sup> Yuri Lukanov commentary on Radio Liberty (Ukrainian Service), December 22, 2010.

<sup>488</sup> Ibid.

<sup>489</sup> Vaclav Havel’s “greengrocer” metaphor depicting compliance of a private person to a regime based on duplicity and pressure is discussed in Chapter 1, section 1.3.b.

continue to the tradition of the “the party of power” were made in the time of Viktor Yushchenko’s presidency as well. Shortly after his inauguration for the presidency, a “party of President Yushchenko supporters” was established by the “nomenklatura” of his government – the party convention brought together “the chiefs of all major government agencies, key ministers, governors, mayors, a vice prime minister, the head of the National Security Council, and the State Secretary of Ukraine.”<sup>490</sup> Yet, although President Yushchenko “did not change the principles of the government bureaucracy,” he did change its atmosphere making it “more relaxed and benevolent.” Arguably, the government did not become less corrupt, but it did become even less orderly and more anarchic.<sup>491</sup> Yushchenko’s party “Popular Union ‘Our Ukraine’” never became a true “party of power” and declined in significance even before the term of Yushchenko’s presidency expired.

The latest project of “the party of power” in Ukraine’s politics is the Party of Regions in the presidency of Viktor Yanukovich. This party, initially founded as a promoter of local governments autonomy, later evolved into the political holding of the “Donetsk clan” and then ousted or absorbed a number of its former

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Its applicability to the Orange Revolution metaphor is discussed in greater detail in: Peter Voitsekhovsky. In the Footsteps of 1989: Ukraine’s Orange Revolution as a Carnival of Anti-politics. Vladimir Tismaneanu and Bogdan Iacob (eds.) *The End And the Beginning: Revolutions of 1989 and the Resurgence of History*, CEU Press, 2012; pp. 543–558.

<sup>490</sup> Information communique quoted from: URL: [http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Наша\\_Украина\\_\(партия\)](http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Наша_Украина_(партия))

<sup>491</sup> Anatoly Strelaniyi, *ibid.* The commentator also notes that, in absence of the rule of law -- as the Soviet style bureaucracy is trained to fulfill personal commands from a boss rather than impersonal rules and procedures – such slackness of authority resulted in chaos and anarchy of President Yushchenko’s administration.

competitors and rivals that used to represent other regional clans. Its political style fully repeats the same methods of pressure and fraud that were used by its predecessors, but in a more rigid and merciless fashion. Journalists have described it as “an asphalt roller,” “an elephant in a china shop,” and “an occupation force.”<sup>492</sup> Under Yanukovych, the Party of Regions became nearly as overwhelmingly present in power and as comprehensively controlling power as Vladimir Putin’s United Russia. It has also been likened to the CPSU (while the style of its leaders, especially Viktor Yanukovych himself, was likened to the style of Leonid Brezhnev).<sup>493</sup>

Leaders of the Party of Regions claim for themselves the reputation of “strong managers,” while critics emphasize their unlawful, corrupt, and authoritarian practices.<sup>494</sup> Analysts point out that pressure methods of the Yanukovych party in electoral campaigns of 2010 and 2012 made a stronger reliance on intimidation, by means of a “merge between the party of power, the law enforcement, and criminal gangs.” In many instances, criminal gangs would physically threaten or attack the Party of Regions’ opponents, while law enforcement officers would take no action against them.<sup>495</sup>

The “party of power” model appears increasingly outdated and compromised, although still entrenched in post-Soviet polities. Putin’s United

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<sup>492</sup> Yevgeny Magda. The Curse of the Pechersk Hills. *UNIAN News*. February 6, 2012.(In Ukrainian).

<sup>493</sup> Albiy Shudria for BBC Ukraine, June 23, 2011.

<sup>494</sup> Vitaly Portnikov. The Party of Broken Bulbs. *Zerkalo Nedeli*, July 21, 2012.(in Russian).

<sup>495</sup> Viktor Nebozhenko on *Censor.net*, October 12, 2012.

Russia, famously nicknamed “the party of crooks and thieves,” had to resort to unconcealed fraud in the 2011 Duma elections. This caused the Putin regime to shift to more fundamentalist anti-Western ideological frames in order to reinforce its legitimacy. By the same token, Ukraine’s Party of Regions is believed “to have been infected with the virus of self-destruction” from the moment it became ‘the party of power’ because all of them are “doomed to quickly fade and decay.”<sup>496</sup>

In general terms, there is a fundamental difference between a post-Soviet “party of power” and a ruling party in developed democracies. The strength of a ruling party comes from winning in competitive elections, which means that its ideas and statements at a given time express the will of the majority of voters. In contrast, a “party of power” is not a product of the society at large; it is formed by the ruling group only in order to make an appearance of being a legitimate ruler.

Another notable distinction of a “party of power” is its typically dull and colorless composition: by default, it has to be an organization of obedient officials who become its functionaries.

The life span of a specific “party of power” is limited to the duration of its leader’s rule. At the same time, the core of a “party of power” easily changes party names, but keeps the unchanged functions and largely unchanged composition.<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>496</sup> Yevgeny Magda, *ibid.*

<sup>497</sup> This generalized characterization of a party of power is based on: Online Dictionary of Democratic Newspeak and Euphemisms (in Russian). A *Livejournal* project. URL: [http://users.livejournal.com/\\_darkus\\_/371129.html](http://users.livejournal.com/_darkus_/371129.html)

## **6.2. Falsness of Conventional Party Taxonomies**

Political science textbooks and reference sources describe Ukraine's political parties in terms of the traditional ideological spectrum: parties are labeled, with variations, as "left," "right," or "centrist," for example:

"The political party spectrum of Ukraine has been completely filled, from the ultra-right to the ultra-left. Upon departing from the single-party system, Ukraine arrived at a hypertrophied multi-party system. Its existing parties are traditionally divided, according to their political orientation, into the right wing – radical nationalist parties, the left wing – parties of socialist and communist orientation; centrist parties make up a broad spectrum that includes national-democratic, national-statist, and liberal-democratic orientations; within it, one can identify center-right, centrist, and center-left parties." <sup>498</sup>

For a while, political scientists were taking the ideological self-identification of Ukrainian political parties at its face value. Andrew Wilson was one of the few exceptions when he wrote, in an ironic manner, about the "not particularly green Greens and the not particularly social democratic Social Democrats" in the Ukrainian parliament. <sup>499</sup>

The Green Party became a prominent example of a party name turned into a misnomer. Founded in 1990 as a network of environmentalist clubs, the party was one of the first to trade its genuine identity for big wallet membership: in the

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<sup>498</sup> Aleksei Golobutsky et al. *Political Parties of Ukraine*, 1996. Accessed online. URL: <http://golob.narod.ru/politpar.html>

<sup>499</sup> Andrew Wilson. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

elections of 1998 it allowed a number of rich businessmen and bankers – previously not associated with green movement -- to run for the Supreme Rada at the top of its list of candidates. The party name earned them 5.4% of the total vote and 19 seats in the Rada. The Green Party faction became noted for a “camouflage” use of an attractive ideological label.<sup>500</sup>

Another notable example of the same kind was the United Social Democratic Party that got through the electoral threshold in 1998 and 2002, owing to targeted use of “administrative resource” (essentially, a version of machine politics).<sup>501</sup> At that time, the party openly acted as a classic rent-seeking political entrepreneur profiting from protectionism and political influence in business. This made the leader of the Socialist Party (claiming to be “genuinely” socialist), Oleksandr Moroz famously say that “Ukraine’s social democrats are like guinea pigs – which are neither pigs, nor from Guinea.”<sup>502</sup> It may be argued that the

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<sup>500</sup> Politically, the Green Party faction was indistinguishable from other big business groups that made up the amorphous “party of power.” The Green Party brand never became winning again: in 2002 and 2006, the party could not pass the 3% threshold and received, respectively, 1.3% and 0.5% of the vote.

<sup>501</sup> The political style of the USDP under Viktor Medvedchuk is described in the previous section.

<sup>502</sup> Multiply quoted. One mention accessed at URL:  
<http://24.ua/news/print/id/72863.htm>

The party’s strong-arm tactic of inflating its membership was reflected in the fact the number of votes received by USDP in 2002 – at the peak of its influence -- was less than the number of registered members that it claimed to have (ibid.).



Medvedchuk group appropriated the existing party brand by means of a “raider takeover” at the party convention in 1998.<sup>503</sup>

The selling of positions on party candidate lists and “hostile takeovers” of previously existing party organizations are only some of the forms of “politics as business” that distort ideological identities of political parties in Ukraine. They are discussed in more detail in the following section. But the majority of Ukrainian parties – including the most influential ones – have intrinsically confusing and vague ideological orientations. The “party system” they make is more like a “Potemkin village” of ideological veils.

“Ukraine’s motley political space where you can see nominal radicals, nominal liberals, and nominal socialists is only an appearance of colors and names,” maintains a young political activist.<sup>504</sup> Although an official program statement is required for a political party’s registration, the statements submitted these days are very short, vague, and meaningless, unlike the elaborate platforms that used to be developed by the first few registered parties in early 1990s.<sup>505</sup>

As shown by the course of political competition of the 1990s, virtual populist projects trumped over attempts to build ideologically-based political parties with mass constituencies in the post-Soviet space.<sup>506</sup> One important reason of that

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<sup>503</sup> Ibid.

<sup>504</sup> Andrei Sambros. *Ukrainska Pravda*, March 29, 2012.

<sup>505</sup> Maria Karmazina, *ibid.*

<sup>506</sup> Andrew Wilson. *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet Space*.

outcome was undoubtedly the confusion of ideological frames and values in the post-Soviet mind – as shown by the case of the Ukrainian society.<sup>507</sup> Observers note that in today's Ukrainian politics, “right” and “left” ideological identifications are confused with “cultural markers” of Ukrainian vs. Soviet-Russian identity.<sup>508</sup> Nostalgia for the Soviet Union is mistakenly considered “left” although it increasingly blends with fundamentalist Russian nationalism; so the declared “left” identity acquires a duplicitous “right” lining. Similar doublethink is ingrained in the Ukrainian patriotic mind which shares anti-communist sentiments, but expects quasi-socialist paternalistic policies from its government. Such mindset of voters was an invitation for electoral populism that went out of proportion in the aftermath of the Orange Revolution.<sup>509</sup>

The second major reason for the duplicity and hollowness of party ideologies is the fact all political parties in Ukraine remain personalistic: each of them is fully subordinate to the party leader. Invariably, the leader creates the party – instead of the party putting forward its leader. That is a model of “socialization turned upside down.”<sup>510</sup> Although some of the parties boast of very high numbers of

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<sup>507</sup> As discussed in Chapter 1, section 1.4.

<sup>508</sup> Aleksei Mustafin. *Zerkalo Nedeli*, May 11, 2011. The same point is elaborated by Mikhail Dubniansky (as discussed in Chapter 1, section 1.4).

<sup>509</sup> Discussed in detail further in Chapter 4, sections 4.2 and 4.3.

<sup>510</sup> Yuri Moevyi. *Ukrainska Pravda*, May 25, 2010.

registered members,<sup>511</sup> membership in that model becomes formal and insignificant. Grass-root members are only needed for legitimizing the leader. Their token financial contributions, if any at all, are unimportant for the party's finances. Nor does the party normally count on their volunteer campaign work. Thus the political party, for all practical purposes, becomes embodied by its leader and the bureaucratic staff of the party office; and they seem to prefer it to be that way -- rather than to share the power with unpredictable "mass participants." That situation also invites personalistic leaders to abuse populist methods and "token" issues such as the Russian language in an easy drive for votes.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in the aftermath of the Orange Revolution, when street rallies became an accepted form of party legitimation (and Soviet-style coercion was no longer usable for providing mass attendance of rallies), "rent-a-crowd" services became widely spread in Kiev as well as in other cities of Ukraine.<sup>512</sup> The Party of Regions -- which claims to have the widest constituency of members and supporters -- was the first to resort to conducting fake rallies where attendees were hired by the hour; their political opponents, especially Yulia Tymoshenko's organization, were doing the same, perhaps on a smaller scale.<sup>513</sup>

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<sup>511</sup> Most notably, the Party of Regions under President Yanukovich claims to have 1.5 million registered members -- which is comparable to the size of the CPSU membership in Soviet Ukraine.

<sup>512</sup> Richard Boudreaux. Bucks Populi: Making Democracy a Going Concern in Kiev. Rent-a-Crowd Entrepreneurs Find People Fast to Cheer or Jeer for \$4 an Hour. *Wall Street Journal*, February 5, 2010.

<sup>513</sup> The subject is discussed in more detail further in Chapter 4, section 4.2.

The Communist Party of Ukraine, reinstalled in 1993, for a number of years was considered the only “real” party with an ideological platform and an organized network of followers. But over time its ideological sincerity has been thoroughly questioned because all through the years the Communist faction has mostly sided with “oligarchic” governments against “liberal” opposition. Legislators and high officials from the CPU supported oligarchic privatization schemes and earned dividends for themselves.<sup>514</sup> It looks obvious to many that CPU’s expensive campaign billboards with the slogan, “The country for millions, not for millionaires” are actually paid for by those millionaires themselves.<sup>515</sup>

The key issues on their agenda have included “return to the USSR,” apologetics of Stalin, “defense” of the Russian language, protests against accession to NATO, etc. But they were very remote from being a genuine “left movement that would defend the working people’s interests;” in fact, issues of labor interests are seldom mentioned at all.<sup>516</sup> A Ukrainian publicist points out that today’s Communist Party leaders reveal their doublethink when they “shout about the criminal power, but vote unanimously with that criminal power; when they lobby for the interests of their children’s businesses; when they wear luxury watches, drive luxury cars, and acquire expensive real estate without declaring their sources of income.” She adds that, just like in Soviet times, Ukrainian communist leaders “declare one thing, have something

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<sup>514</sup> Larysa Denysenko. *Ukrainska Pravda*, November 1, 2012.

<sup>515</sup> Oleksandr Demchenko. *Ukrainska Pravda*, November 23, 2012

<sup>516</sup> Igor Losev, *Ukrainska Pravda*, November 12, 2010.

different in mind, then act differently to what they say, and lie about what they do. This is indecent, repulsive, and has nothing to do with left ideology.”<sup>517</sup>

One other distinctly ideological party in today’s Ukraine is the Svoboda (“Freedom”) Party -- positioned as the ultimate antithesis to the Communists. It stands out for energetic and tightly organized membership. Some feel that, despite its ideology of conservative nationalism, Svoboda is “the only political party of the European type” in Ukraine: its campaigns are carried out by volunteer enthusiasts rather than by indifferent pay-per-event personnel.<sup>518</sup> In today’s Ukraine, that is perceived as a unique and impressive political style, which appears to be winning: Svoboda made a strong showing in the local elections of 2010 and in the parliamentary elections in 2012. Also, the party gradually expands the territory of its influence from West to East. Its radicalism is appealing to voters who want resolute action to address perceived social injustice.<sup>519</sup>

But despite its strong anti-communist convictions, Svoboda appears paradoxically close to the communist tradition of extremist message framing and to the anti-liberal rhetoric of communists. Like in Dovlatov’s narrative, “Soviet” and “anti-Soviet” identities become surprisingly alike.<sup>520</sup> Also, Svoboda’s views on the

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<sup>517</sup> Larysa Denysenko, *ibid.*

<sup>518</sup> Oleksandr Demchenko. *Ukrainska Pravda*, November 23, 2012.

<sup>519</sup> This characterization is based on the comprehensive report by the Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research *Positions and Propositions of Political Parties in the Parliamentary Elections of 2012.*” Retrieved from URL: [www.icipr.kiev.ua](http://www.icipr.kiev.ua)

<sup>520</sup> See Chapter 1, section 1.3.b for details.

regulatory role of government fully coincide with the Communist Party positions.<sup>521</sup> Social populism – the promise to keep Ukraine’s inordinately big system of welfare support and subsidies -- becomes a common denominator for all major parties including Svoboda. For that reason, some argue that Ukraine does not have any truly right-wing parties, and Svoboda is marked by doublethink mentality like everybody else.<sup>522</sup>

Likewise, the two “heavy-weight” political parties – Yulia Tymoshenko’s “United Opposition Motherland” and Viktor Yanukovich’s Party of Regions – are both noted for “exploiting populist slogans in the same hypocritical fashion, like identical twins.”<sup>523</sup> Both are equally inconsistent in their right-left orientations. “Motherland” and its components (“Front of Change”, “Reforms and Order,” and others) claim a “center-right” orientation; but the general mode of their statements and policies is described as “romantically colored leftist populism.” Like their political competitors, “Motherland” politicians promise “social justice” that has to be regulated and delivered by the government.<sup>524</sup> “Motherland” seems to intentionally evade clarity of position statements, and displays doublethink on important issues. For example, despite its declared support of civil society

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<sup>521</sup> Ibid.

<sup>522</sup> Mykola Filonov. *Ukrainska Pravda*, March 28, 2013.

<sup>523</sup> *Ukrainska Pravda*,

<sup>524</sup> *Positions and Propositions of Political Parties in the Parliamentary Elections of 2012.*” See also Chapter 1, section 1.4 for a more detailed discussion.

development, this bloc voted down several bills that would make civic associations more independent from the government.<sup>525</sup>

The Party of Regions has been just as confusing about its ideological orientation. Its programmatic statements combine “individual freedom, socially responsible state, and innovative society.” Its spokesmen also claimed that the party’s platform “is beyond the boundaries of right and left ideologies.”<sup>526</sup> Experts characterize the party’s actual views as “a mix of corporatism with electoral populism.” In that interpretation, post-Soviet corporatism is defined as “only seemingly amorphous; it is neither communist, nor liberal, neither socialist, nor nationalist; yet it is clearly identifiable -- as the ideology of benefits, subsidies, and all powers given to ‘our side’; essentially, it is the allocation of all resources of the country to members of ‘the corporation’.”<sup>527</sup> A philosopher described this position as “capitalism with Bolshevik fangs.”<sup>528</sup>

Some of Ukraine’s leading “political technologists”<sup>529</sup> assert that there has come “the end of politics” for political parties – because the pragmatic approach of “doing politics as business” essentially made political ideas and platforms meaningless. “Today’s politics no longer depends on political views, platforms, or

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<sup>525</sup> Ibid.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid.

<sup>527</sup> Andrei Illarionov. Quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>528</sup> Igor Losev. *Ukrainska Pravda*, November 12, 2010.

<sup>529</sup> This post-Soviet term is sometimes paraphrased as “spin doctors.” Andrew Wilson explained its meaning as “a post-Soviet euphemism” denoting a specialist in the “highly developed industry of political manipulation.” (Andrew Wilson, *ibid.*).

institutions. It is all defined by money and [political] technologies,” maintains a respected expert.<sup>530</sup>

Civil society activists make an opposite point. On the one hand, they agree that “today’s parties with their shadow financing and business-style marketing are the creators and the victims of the era of cynicism [in Ukraine’s society].” On the other hand, they emphasize that “Ukraine will become ‘a normal country’ when the people realize that only politics – i.e. political parties – will be able to provide their economic and social interests.”<sup>531</sup> Hence, the society’s goal should be to move toward developing “proper parties of the future.”

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<sup>530</sup> Kostyantyn Bondarenko. *Ukrainska Pravda*, January 28, 2011.

<sup>531</sup> Ostap Kryvdyk. *Ukrainska Pravda*, December 27, 2010.



### **6.3. The “Market Side” of Party Politics**

A recent scholarly study framed post-Soviet party politics in Russia as “electoral markets,” in which the parties are “suppliers of products, such as reputation, organization, and financing,” and the candidates are consumers: they “decide to ‘buy’ party products agreeing to run for office on party labels” in the hope that those products will help them get elected.<sup>532</sup> Observations of Ukraine’s party politics suggest that the concept of “market” can be applied here as well, but with some modifications.

Consistently with the “market” concept, political parties are set up and handled in Ukraine like business entities. Law firms openly advertise services in legal creation of political parties. In addition to “preparing the complete package of registration documents and legal support of the registration procedure at the Ministry of Justice,” such services also include “collecting signatures from ten thousand citizens in two thirds of counties nationwide, as required,” and “developing the party’s official program and bylaws.”<sup>533</sup>

Registered parties have been traded almost like private companies and commercial brands, based on the firm (although informal) understanding that they are “owned” by the party leader. In that fashion, Viktor Medvedchuk’s group “appropriated” the United Social Democratic Party in 1998 from its earlier

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<sup>532</sup> Henry Hale. *Why Not Parties In Russia?* Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 9-10.

<sup>533</sup> Maria Karmazina. *Ukrainska Pravda*, November 19, 2011.

founders;<sup>534</sup> former mayor of Kiev Oleksandr Omelchenko “purchased” the Unity (Yednist) Party in 2000,<sup>535</sup> and the Party of Regions brand was acquired by the Donetsk “clan” in 2001 after a series of transformations and transfers of its “ownership.”<sup>536</sup> More recently, a new party of the major league, “People’s Self-Defense” (Narodna Samooborona), emerged from the rebranding of an old “dwarf” party, “Forward, Ukraine!” – after its “purchase” by the “political entrepreneur” David Zhvania.<sup>537</sup> Three years later, the same entrepreneur was reported allegedly purchasing another “dwarf” party, the “Christian Democratic Alliance.” Notably, a well-informed expert on Ukraine’s party politics commented that the purchased entity “had been overcapitalized and would soon depreciate.”<sup>538</sup>

Advertisements about “a party for sale” can even be found in on-line classifieds. In one instance, an investigative journalist contacted the buyer and was told that “the party is ready for running in local and parliamentary elections because it has been registered for two full years; the party also has registered provincial chapters; it can be quickly switched to a new leadership and re-registered under a new name.” The asking price was 180,000 USD.<sup>539</sup>

Those examples may help to understand how Ukraine got to have as many as 202 registered political parties in 2012, with most of them meeting every

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<sup>534</sup> See section 3.1 for details and references.

<sup>535</sup> Inna Vedernikova. *Zerkalo Nedeli*, May 21, 2010.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>537</sup> Volodymyr Fesenko in *Gazeta.ua*, September 13, 2010. explain 2007,,, Lutsenko. New coalition. NUNS.

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>539</sup> *Ukrainska Pravda*, February 10, 2010.

criterion to be called “fake formations” of “virtual politics.”<sup>540</sup> In order to explain the practical value of investing in such virtual entities, experts use the term “satellite parties.”<sup>541</sup> Satellite parties play several roles in the politics of pretense and imitation.

First, they serve as decoys for the unsophisticated voter of “anti-establishment” orientation. It is commonly believed that the incumbent’s advantage is stronger when there are two or three dozen “opposition” candidates rather than just two or three. Each “satellite” posing as an opponent draws away at least some votes from the viable opposition. Plus, in a kaleidoscope of names and labels it is more difficult to differentiate between genuine and “brandjacked” entities. For example, a sympathizer of the Green Movement would have to make a special effort in order to find out the difference between the Green Party of Ukraine, “The Ukrainian Party ‘Green Planet’,” and “The Political Party ‘Greens’.”<sup>542</sup> Such technology has worked effectively since the 1990s, wherefore the vast majority of political parties – arguably, about 95% of the total – are “fakes and ghosts turned away from the people.” Instead of serving as tools of democratic linkage, those parties distort and block the expression of the public demand and thus act as “agents of de-democratization.”<sup>543</sup>

Second, “satellite” parties enjoy equal rights with the few “real” contenders, and therefore the electoral law entitles them to seats on electoral commissions. That is a tradable resource of political influence. An expert points out

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<sup>540</sup> Maria Karmazina. Zerkalo Nedeli, April 5, 2013.

<sup>541</sup> Aleksei Mustafin. Zerkalo Nedeli, September 14, 2012.

<sup>542</sup> Ibid.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid.

that the trend started back in the 1990s; but it grew to enormous scale by 2010, what with the number of “satellites” and the scale of trading on that resource.<sup>544</sup>

Third, with increased competition for influential roles in the “party of power,” it gives one more weight to have a “private” party under your name, even if a small one. Similarly, medieval knights were expected to join the king’s army with at least a small troop of lancers in their service. In modern-day Ukrainian politics, Serhiy Tihipko did precisely that with his “Strong Ukraine” party when he declared joining the Party of Regions in 2012.<sup>545</sup> By the same token, David Zhvania joined the Party of Regions’ faction in the Rada upon becoming a leader of his own “satellite party”.

“Market” relations between parties and political candidates truly became institutionalized – but they acquired the form of de-ideologized monetary transactions. Like the Green Party did in 1998,<sup>546</sup> all major parties now commonly sell their candidate list positions for cash donations to the party treasuries. Rich

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<sup>544</sup> Aleksei Mustafin, *ibid.*

<sup>545</sup> Tihipko’s party, Labor Ukraine, lost most of its influence after Ukraine’s second richest tycoon, Viktor Pinchuk, ceased to support it in the aftermath of the Orange Revolution. Tihipko assumed the leadership of that party in 2009 and rebranded it as “Strong Ukraine” in order to run for presidency in a new image. His emergence as a strong contender next to the two favorites of the race -- Viktor Yanukovych and Yulia Tymoshenko – was the biggest surprise of the 2010 elections (Tihipko received 13% of the vote which put him in the third place). His electoral success showed the demand for a viable “third force” as an alternative to the endless and pretentious fight between the parties of Yanukovych and Tymoshenko. But Tihipko chose to join the winner and served as a vice premier until 2012; then he declared that his party would merge with the Party of Regions and became the nominal deputy chairman of that party – despite protests from Strong Ukraine’s local chapters.

<sup>546</sup> See section 3.2 above for details.

business leaders who pay those huge sums (unofficially, the price for a guaranteed seat in a Supreme Rada faction may amount to several million US dollars), obtain a somewhat different set of “products” than those listed by Henry Hale. The status of a Supreme Rada member provides highly valued immunity from criminal prosecution, and even more importantly, influence for lobbying their business interests with the government. Thus, nominations of legislative candidates became the most important “party business,” and every party leader conducts it single-handedly and confidentially, behind closed doors.<sup>547</sup>

Another aspect of “political business” is purchase of legislators’ re-affiliation with another political party. The payment can be tit-for-tat (such as resolution of specific problems for the legislator, or appointments of the legislator’s relatives or buddies to important jobs), as well as payment of a monetary reward. In some instances, monetary or tit-for-tat rewards are promised, but do not materialize.<sup>548</sup>

Scandals caused by such dealings erupted in the Supreme Rada many times. In 2007, a scandal caused by massive re-affiliation of legislators resulted in a dissolution of the parliament elected in 2006. More recently, a scandal erupted in 2012 when a legislator published an audio recording of a conversation with a colleague from another faction in which he was offered a half-million dollars for switching to the other side; the talk mentioned payments to other legislators as well.

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<sup>547</sup> Svitlana Kononchuk, *Ukrainska Pravda*, July 11, 2012.

<sup>548</sup> Interview with Taras Chornovil, *Ukrainska Pravda*, September 20, 2010.

Interestingly, the Prosecutor General refused to investigate that incident claiming that it was no more than an ethical violation.<sup>549</sup>

Arguably, the best kept secret of Ukraine's political parties is their funding. Party budgets, like most of their inner work, are non-transparent, secretive, shadowed. Party leaders obviously prefer to be funded by few wealthy "customers" rather than to build up broad networks of financial support. Formal requirements of financial reporting are fulfilled inconsistently and reveal only "white book" transactions, but do not disclose operations with "black box cash."<sup>550</sup>

Those issues are not typically brought up for outspoken discussions. But, according to an independent political observer, "everybody understands that the main instrument of political funding in Ukraine is the buying and selling of political influences. One of its forms is the buying and selling of political parties and legislators in the Supreme Rada... The whole building of the country's politics rests on corruption."<sup>551</sup>

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<sup>549</sup> Anna Yashchenko, UNIAN News, February 22, 2012.

<sup>550</sup> Svitlana Kononchuk. *Ukrainska Pravda*, October 4, 2012.

<sup>551</sup> Taras Vozniak. *Ukrainska Pravda*. February 20, 2013.

**CHAPTER 7.**  
**POST-ORWELLIAN MACHINE POLITICS:**  
**SIMULATED SUPPLY AND DELUDED DEMAND**

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**7.1. Supply and Demand Model of Electoral Politics**

Henry Hale's model of supply and demand relations between political parties and candidates leaves the voter out of the picture. A more comprehensive model to describe the political process was proposed by Richard Rose *et al.*<sup>552</sup> That model is based on the view that "elites propose, masses dispose"; while it is the elites who propose new institutions and policies, it matters just as much what the people think about those choices. The supply and demand model also describes the institutionalization of political parties as "persisting commitments" to parties by political elites (supply) and by voters (demand).<sup>553</sup> In conditions of "stable" supply, the elites maintain the same parties at one election after another. If, instead, volatile "flash" parties emerge with every new election, voters cannot hold politicians accountable by reaffirming or withdrawing their support of a particular party.

Such supply-and-demand model implies several possible outcomes of post-communist transition. Its explanatory power is compared in Exhibit 4.1 with two other actor-centric explanations of post-communist regime change. Stable democracy is the outcome when a democratic demand is met with reformist

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<sup>552</sup> Richard Rose, William Mishler and Christian Haerper. *Democracy and its Alternatives. Understanding Post-Communist Societies. 1999.*

<sup>553</sup> Richard Rose and William Mishler. A supply–demand model of party-system institutionalization: The Russian case. *Party Politics.*, 16(6), 2010, pp. 801–821.

democratic supply. By the same token, both the elites and the masses may repudiate democracy in favor of a non-democratic alternative. Finally, a lack of democratic supply may be met with a lowered public demand: the people are frustrated with the politicians, but prefer that the state would leave them alone. This results in a “very imperfect” democracy which the people may tolerate as a “lesser evil” as compared to undemocratic alternatives.

In comparison, it appears that the ‘supply and demand’ model explains post-Soviet regime change better than the two elite-centered models. The elite-centered models cannot explain, for instance, a notable path divergence between Ukraine and Belarus which occurred at the bifurcation point of two presidential elections in 1994. However, the supply-and-demand model plausibly explains the advent of President Lukashenka’s dictatorship in Belarus in contrast to the emergence of a rent-seeking regime under President Kuchma in Ukraine.<sup>554</sup>

Electoral politics in Ukraine perfectly fits into the category of a “low level equilibrium” of Richard Rose’s model where poor supply matches low demand. As discussed further, the legacy of doublethink helps to understand the causes of that equilibrium: it creates the environment of imitative supply and deluded demand.

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<sup>554</sup> This comparison is discussed in more detail here:

Peter Voitsekhovsky. *A ‘Denationalized Nation or an ‘Opening for the Savior’? Alternative Perspectives on Ukraine-Belarus Path Divergence.* Presented at the ASN 9<sup>th</sup> Annual World Convention, 2004.



*Exhibit 4.1. Actor-centric perspectives on post-communist regime change*

<i>Author</i>	<i>Bunce (2000), McFaul (2002)</i>	<i>Åslund (2001)</i>	<i>Rose et al. (1999)</i>
<i>Independent Variable</i>	Balance of power	Goal of regime change	Supply and demand of policies
<i>Actors</i>	Forces of <i>ancien regime</i> ; forces of change	Regime power-holders	Elites and masses
<b>OUTCOMES (REGIME TRAJECTORIES)</b>			
<b>“GOOD”</b>	Balance in favor of reformers ↓ democracy	Radical reform ↓ democracy and dynamic market economy	Positive equilibrium (demand of reforms meets supply) ↓ stable democracy
<b>“MIXED”</b>	Stalemate ↓ hybrid or ambiguous regime	Rent-seeking ↓ semi-democratic, semi-privatized rent-seeking society	Low-level equilibrium (poor supply, low demand) ↓ “broken-backed democracy”
<b>“BAD”</b>	Balance in favor of “ancien regime” ↓ autocracy	Consolidation of power, no reform ↓ dictatorship with state-controlled economy	Undemocratic supply and undemocratic or suppressed demand ↓ autocracy

## **7.2. New-Old-Speak of Party Messages**

In twenty plus years of post-Soviet history, electoral proposition in Ukraine has been characterized as prevaricate and rich in myth. In presidential elections, candidates typically framed their messages with exaggerated antagonism and in fateful “make or break” terms. Thus, each candidate would make an effort to mobilize the voters, first and foremost, not so much in favor of oneself, but against the opponent, in order to prevent “the bad side” from winning. In other words, the suggested logic for the voter would be to look not “for the greater good,” but “for the lesser evil.”

The juxtaposition of the “good” and the “evil” was invariably related to pro-Russian and anti-Russian (or “patriotic”) sentiments. Remarkably, successful candidates were able to identify, alternately, first with one side, then with the other. Thus, Leonid Kravchuk won the presidential election in 1991 as “the lesser evil” for 62% of voters, when juxtaposed against the “nationalist” Vyacheslav Chornovil. Four years later, Kravchuk carried the “nationalist” vote against Leonid Kuchma who was perceived as “the agent of Russia.” But in 1999, Leonid Kuchma, likewise, became “the lesser evil” for the patriots in the runoff against the Communist Party candidate Petro Symonenko.

In reality, the contrast between such candidates proves to be less significant.<sup>555</sup> Even Viktor Yushchenko and Viktor Yanukovich who appeared to

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<sup>555</sup> Discussed by Serhiy Kolyzhniak, in *Novynar*, February 16, 2010.

clash on irreconcilable differences during the Orange Revolution in 2004, became political allies again in less than two years' time.<sup>556</sup>

Philosopher Dmitry Vydrin speaks about electoral campaigns in Ukraine as “a struggle between imitations within one and the same cynical corporate political consciousness.”<sup>557</sup> It appears that the imitations had at least some realistic component for a number of years: even though competing political camps assumed partly “imagined” labels, they tried to appeal to specific social groups, and they had to debate about political choices. A campaign manager recalls that “every candidate tried to create unique proposition with a unique label. People were voting for identifiable things: leftist values, national-democratic principles, young talent, conservative wisdom, etc.”<sup>558</sup> Candidates tried to talk in terms of “casual ideologies” addressing people’s day-to-day lives.<sup>559</sup>

In the aftermath of the Orange Revolution, the trend changed. Political competition virtualized. Campaign promises became vaguer and avoided specific “deliverables.” Direct advertising on billboards and TV became the leading form of communication with voters.<sup>560</sup> Taking voters into account was simulated by establishing telephone “hotlines” where voters were encouraged to call with their

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<sup>556</sup> In 2006, President Yushchenko appointed Viktor Yanukovych to the Prime Minister position. In 2009, Yushchenko essentially supported Yanukovych in his presidential campaign against Yulia Tymoshenko.

<sup>557</sup> Dmitry Vydrin. *Ukrainska Pravda*, July 14, 2009.

<sup>558</sup> Artem Bidenko. *Ukrainska Pravda*, January 13, 2010.

<sup>559</sup> Yuri Butusov. *Zerkalo Nedeli*, January 22, 2010.

<sup>560</sup> Artem Bidenko, *ibid*.

### Exhibit 7.2.a: “Rent-a-crowd” post-Orange rallies



Rent-a-crowd rally participants can be easily recognized by their melancholic looks and lack of enthusiasm.

*Source: Korrespondent.net, 2007.*

## Exhibit 4.2.b: Virtualized contestation in post-Orange politics



**Top:** campaign banners from Yulia Tymoshenko in 2009 were a perfect example of appeal based on emotion rather than reason. While she was the Prime Minister of Ukraine -- and her government was criticized both by President Viktor Yushchenko and the opposition leader Viktor Yanukovich -- the banners, produced in Tymoshenko party colors, carried multiply repeated message, with no names: "They promise – SHE WORKS; they obstruct – SHE WORKS; they hamper – SHE WORKS."

**Bottom:** A Yanukovich billboard for 2010 presidential election campaign exemplifies the virtual and message-less style of post-Orange campaigns. The poster slogan reads: "Ukraine is for the people." Other buzz slogans of that campaign were "to make life better" and "stability and well-being."

questions to candidates.<sup>561</sup> Efforts to win voters' minds or hearts were, to a large degree, replaced by efforts to cynically buy their vote.<sup>562</sup>

As the result, Ukraine developed "a caricature of the democratic election model." The country's leading expert in election monitoring believes that its new "oligarchic-virtual campaign style" is common in post-Soviet polities, as well as in resource-rich African countries. This campaign style is based on "big money" with a "business plan that calculates spending forecast per vote," after which "everything is purchased" including "huge amounts of advertising, brand personalities for promotional campaign, 'zakazukha' (secretly paid promotional coverage disguised as news), bonuses for electoral commission members and fees for hired rally crowds."

<sup>563</sup>

Rent-a-crowd services became openly advertised in classifieds, and both the government parties and the opposition were buying services from the same providers.<sup>564</sup> It seemed easier and cheaper for both opposing political camps to hire a crowd of "supporters" waving their banners than to build up networks of genuine grass-root supporters; but even more importantly, such Potemkinist technology allowed party leaders to fake accountability to their electorate.

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<sup>561</sup> Yuri Butusov, *ibid.*

<sup>562</sup> Artem Bidenko, *ibid.* Forms of voter bribing are discussed further in section 4.3.

<sup>563</sup> Igor Popov. *Korrespondent*, October 19, 2012.

<sup>564</sup> "Companies supply rally participants both for the opposition and the coalition." BBC Ukrainian Service, April 23, 2007.

That situation reflects that fact that oligarchic clans continue to “own” Ukrainian politics and parties. A prominent publicist maintains that “out of the 450 legislators in the Rada, the few wealthy families who own everything in Ukraine are represented by 450 of them.” Thus, none of them is truly “left-wing” or “right-wing,” they only use “either left or right rhetoric” which makes no difference for the power bosses as long as their interests are maintained.<sup>565</sup>

The same point is made by analysts who emphasize that “today’s opposition parties [who oppose President Yanukovich] are fake because they do not have a genuine social base. “If you ask an opposition politician who they see as their voter, the answer will be vague and uncertain, ‘Our voters are the whole Ukrainian nation.’ That explains why there is a big gap between what the opposition does and what the society expects them to do.”<sup>566</sup>

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<sup>565</sup> Taras Vozniak.

<sup>566</sup> Yaroslav Pavlovsky. *Ukrainska Pravda*, November 14, 2011.

### **7.3. “Please Fool Us Again”: Paradoxes of Voting Behavior**

The majority of Ukrainians are dissatisfied with the situation in their country; yet they continue to support those politicians who should be held accountable for it. Such is the paradox that often puzzles both foreign visitors and domestic analysts.<sup>567</sup>

Ukrainian survey data from different years confirm Yuri Levada’s observation that the post-Soviet voter “begs to be fooled” and expects to hear “nice fairy tales” from political leaders.<sup>568</sup> On the eve of elections in 2007, 68% of respondents said they did not believe in the fulfillment of promises from the candidates they would vote for. Only 13% said they “hoped” the promises would be kept.<sup>569</sup> Journalists summarized those results in the statement: “We know they will deceive us, but we still vote for them.”

In 2012, 77% of respondents felt they had made the right choice in the previous parliamentary elections. But at the same time, the majority also said that the Supreme Rada was performing poorly, and that voters had little impact on the quality of the elected officials’ performance. 61% felt negative about the fact that many elected officials were big business owners or were closely connected with business tycoons.<sup>570</sup>

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<sup>567</sup> Yuri Shveda. *Ukrainska Pravda*

<sup>568</sup> See Chapter 1, section 1.3.c for more detailed discussion.

<sup>569</sup> *Korrespondent*, 14 August 2007.

<sup>570</sup> Irina Bekeshkina. *Zerkalo Nedeli*, March 29, 2012.



A prominent sociologist explains those paradoxes of the voters' consciousness as "peculiarities of their political culture" – namely, confused and contradictory notions, or "a mixed salad in their heads."<sup>571</sup> A blogger remarks that generational change alone did not result in a new quality of the social consciousness – "the Soviet mind continues to be reproduced, even though Leninist doctrines are no longer imposed on the people."<sup>572</sup>

A political essayist calls this condition "social infantilism." He notes that "the people do not want to take the responsibility for their fate into their own hands; they want someone else to come and do it."<sup>573</sup> The society remains "waiting for Peron"<sup>574</sup> who may come under any name, be it "The Great White Mother" or "The Great Boxer."<sup>575</sup> Such deluded demand creates perpetuating supply of political populism.

Paternalistic expectations, however, are not to be equated with authoritarian sentiment. "What people want is not a dictator – they want the advent of the Almighty God who would resolve their problems," comments the sociologist.<sup>576</sup>

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<sup>571</sup> Ibid.

<sup>572</sup> Andriy Novak, *Ukrainska Pravda*, March 29, 2010.

<sup>573</sup> Taras Vozniak, *ibid.*

<sup>574</sup> The concept of "waiting for Peron" is discussed by Vladimir Tismaneanu in *Fantasies of Salvation* (Princeton University Press, 1998), Chapter 2.

<sup>575</sup> Ironical references, respectively for Yulia Tymoshenko and Vitaliy Klitschko.

<sup>576</sup> Irina Bekeshkina, *ibid.*

#### Exhibit 4.3.a: Leaders as icons



Presidential candidate Yanukovich greeted by a fan, 2004.



Hand-written poster says:  
"Yanukovich –  
you are our God,  
and we believe in You!"

Leaders as icons (continued).



A fan with a portrait of Yulia Tymoshenko dressed in a Ukrainian folk costume (left), and a fan kissing a Yanukovych poster (top).



A woman from the countryside listening to Viktor Yushchenko at an Orange Revolution rally (photo by Konstantin Golubchuk).

Iconization of political leaders started with the Orange Revolution, and continued in its aftermath (see Exhibit 4.3.a). It is obviously connected with the divisive politics of the two big party camps; their divide appears to be so deep that it was even compared with the eve of the Civil War in Spain.<sup>577</sup> Each camp “creates its own reality” and deludes its half of Ukraine to accept it as the only authentic vision. This perpetuates voter behavior driven by infantile emotion that comes ahead of rationality and reason.

Political leaders on both sides replace policy debates with “primitive clichés that can fit into billboards and banners.” The public has been trained to perceive politics in terms of “clichés, bogeys, and political buffoonery on Friday night TV.” Voters are urged “not to delve into complex questions and vote with their hearts – only not with brains. Civic choice has been consistently pushed out of the sphere of reason into the sphere of passion.”<sup>578</sup>

Sociologists note that voters tend to become less demanding of their representatives, as well as more prone to selling their votes.<sup>579</sup> This clearly reflects the overall crisis of moral standards (see Chapter 1, section 1.4). In the words of Vitaly Klitschko, a promising post-Orange political leader, “what is considered a crime in Europe, is a norm in Ukraine. Lies became a habit and the norm of life for the upper class of the country.”<sup>580</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> Mikhail Dubyniansky. *Ukrainska Pravda*, April 27, 2010.

<sup>578</sup> Viktor Tregubov, *Zerkalo Nedeli*, April 19, 2013.

<sup>579</sup> Bekeshkina, *ibid.*

<sup>580</sup> Vitaly Klitschko. *Ukrainska Pravda*, February 24, 2010.

Elections of 2010 and 2012 showed a surge of the new phenomenon of “electoral pyramids” when voters, especially in rural areas, were paid modest amounts of cash – but en masse – for “promoting a candidate.” There could be several hundred of paid “promoters” in every village. Many were saying to TV reporters that they saw nothing wrong with such cash bonuses or food gifts from a candidate.<sup>581</sup> Such was the latest episode in the political behavior of Homo Praevaricatus.

In big urban communities, however, voter bribing apparently became less successful. Its biggest accomplishment is believed to be the political machine of Leonid Chernovetsky who twice won mayoral elections in Kiev (in 2006 and 2008) owing to decisive support from networks of pensioners that had regularly received food supplies from his charity fund. But similar attempts made by his former deputy in 2012 were defeated – the “machine” candidate lost to a more ideologically wholesome candidate from the Klitschko party.

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<sup>581</sup> Tetiana Nikolaenko. *Ukrainska Pravda*, September 21, 2012.

### Exhibit 7.3.b: “Blindfolded voters”



A still from video clip “Voting Blindfolded” by Internews Ukraine released in September 2012. The clip shows scenes of voter bribing and intimidation, where all witnesses voluntarily blindfold themselves to ignore violations of law and morality. In this episode, a campaign operator distributes proverbial “buckwheat packages” as bribes to voters.



#### **7.4. Demand for “Anti-politics”: Strengths and Limitations**

The culture of doublethink and fakeness breeds moral resentment and outrage. Those attitudes played a big role in the collapse of communist regimes. In the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, they expressed the spirit of the revolutions of 1989 which signified a “rebirth” of societies re-enchanted with modernity.<sup>582</sup> The same attitudes were present in the public protests in Moscow in August 1991 which defeated the attempted anti-Gorbachev coup.

In Ukraine, the most powerful outbreak of moral resentment against political duplicity and fakeness became known as the Orange Revolution of 2004. It was Ukraine’s attempt to break with the Soviet past. It is somewhat inaccurately categorized as an “electoral revolution” with implied contrast to the revolutions of 1989: in Kiev, Tbilisi and Belgrade, an election was a catalyst for mass mobilization, whereas in Prague and Berlin, mass mobilization and protests came first, and then free elections followed. ‘Electoral revolutions’ are viewed as only distant relatives of the revolutions of 1989 because: (a) they are thought to be about electoral fraud rather than regime change; (b) their post-communist environment is believed to be less oppressive than the totalitarian communist system; (c) they are thought to be based on preparation and coordination rather than spontaneity.<sup>583</sup>

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<sup>582</sup> As discussed by Karol Soltan (see Chapter 1, section 1.2).

<sup>583</sup> Klara Sogindolska. Comparative Review of the 1989 Democratic Revolutions and the New Electoral Revolutions in the Post-Communist Space. *MPSA Conference Paper*, 2007.

In fact, all three assumptions are inaccurate. Indeed, the presidential election of 2004 became the spark that ignited the events of the revolution. But many observers were asking in those days – is this conflict really about an election? A foreign journalist’s comment conveys this point:

“You begin to feel that there is something you don’t understand in their affairs, that you don’t know their undercurrents. Both sides are convinced that they are choosing not the president, but the fate of their country for decades ahead [...] Otherwise, it is difficult to explain their sitting on the streets under snow, and the declarations, first by the western, then by the eastern provinces, of the intent to secede...”<sup>584</sup>

The assumption that protesters got mobilized by indignation of falsified vote count (election fraud) is not fully accurate: it implies that there had been an electoral race of equally placed contenders. Formally, indeed, there were two main contenders: Viktor Yushchenko, running as an independent candidate, and Viktor Yanukovych as a candidate from the Party of Regions. In reality, however, Yushchenko’s opponent was not Yanukovych or his party; it was the machine of the state, with its arsenal of intimidation techniques and hurdle-making, commonly and euphemistically referred to as “the administrative resource”. A strategist of Yushchenko’s campaign office was explaining to a foreign journalist:

We were confronted with the fact that we had to wage a war with the machine of the state. Nobody was ever able to win against the state. [...] This was the political essence of the situation. The whole machine of the state opposed us, with all its components. Not just some public organizations or parties. No matter whose name was there – Yanukovych or anyone else [of those around president Kuchma] –

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<sup>584</sup> From the commentary by Lev Koshcheev, an editor from Yekaterinburg, dated Dec. 7, 2004. URL: <http://www.rosbalt.ru/main/2004/12/7/188276.html>



particular names were secondary. So Yushchenko was saying this many times: the name does not matter; our opponent is *zlochynna vlada* [‘the criminal authority’].<sup>585</sup>

Thus Yushchenko’s campaign was re-enacting Vaclav Havel’s famous definition of the struggle that led to the revolutions of 1989: “citizens against the state.” Two years earlier, Yushchenko ran for parliament as the leader of the electoral bloc “Our Ukraine” which united ten parties of various calibers. So, his choice to run as a “self-nominated” candidate was a political message in itself.

But how different was the state ruled by president Kuchma from the states ruled by communist regimes? It was no longer totalitarian; yet, Havel himself referred to the Orange revolution as ‘the second act of squaring with the totalitarian regime.’<sup>586</sup> Young people growing in post-communist Ukraine were reading Orwell, thinking about their country, and it was making them want a revolution.<sup>587</sup> Kuchma’s regime inherited many features of the late Soviet system.

One of them was covert repressiveness. Under Stalin, opponents of the regime had been openly arrested and executed. Under Brezhnev, they were frequently placed in psychiatric asylums or sent to forced exile. Under Kuchma, repression was even more covert, but no less formidable, as shown by the tragic case of Georgiy Gongadze – a vocal critic of Kuchma who got kidnapped and secretly murdered by a group of police officers acting on orders that originated from the president’s office.

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<sup>585</sup> Interview with Aleksandr Malikov recorded on January 26, 2005. From the archives of Steven York, the author and producer of the *Orange Revolution* documentary (*A Force More Powerful Films*, 2007).

<sup>586</sup> Vaclav Havel’s address to Viktor Yushchenko at the Senate Library in Washington, DC on April 7, 2005. Quoted from Radio Liberty report, URL: <http://www.radiosvoboda.org/content/article/929107.html>

<sup>587</sup> Oleksiy Tolkachov. The Unknown Stories of the Maidan (in Ukrainian). *Ukrainska Pravda*, November 20, 2009.

A perfect example of the duplicity of Kuchma's regime were the *temnyky* – confidential instructions circulated among editors of the leading media outlets telling them how to cover current events, and which events to ignore. Those memos were formulated in impersonal non-ordering statements and sent to editorial fax machines, unsigned. Their form epitomized the Soviet double-mindedness; they were intended for the professionals of 'reading between the lines.' The phrase 'In the opinion of analysts' meant "you must write this as your point of view"; 'the event is important and topical' meant "give it favorable coverage"; 'there is no comment on this event' stood for "don't even mention that it took place."<sup>588</sup> This was truly Orwellian centrally controlled self-censorship. Journalists and editors complied, fearing intimidations or even fearing for their safety.

Just like in Soviet times, factory and office employees were forced to attend political rallies to express support for the regime. This was described as follows:

Compulsory rallies take place not only during the working hours, but even after a working day. Those who avoid attending them are subjected to various pressures. In Soviet times, collective admiration and fear of the authority were cultivated in accordance with the party and government resolutions. Today, Ukraine's president Leonid Kuchma and his entourage act with the same methods. And the ordinary people have not changed much, either. They grumble in discontent, but sheepishly allow to be pulled by the rope to a butcher. The administrative resource skillfully uses fear and moral weakness of the petty person."<sup>589</sup>

Kuchma's Ukraine was a society of Havelian 'greengrocers' – ordinary people with habitual compliance to the regime and its rules of the game. Since the Soviet times, the rules of the game continued to emphasize duplicity, doublethink, and

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<sup>588</sup> Examples of the *temnyky* from 2001-2004 were published by *Ukrainska Pravda* on March 7, 2007.

<sup>589</sup> <http://korrespondent.net/worldabus/98528>

subconsciously accepted disparity between official law and informal “norms of behavior.” One new feature was an increased scope of bribery and other corrupt practices. Honest journalists spoke in despair about a ‘suffocating’ political atmosphere in the country.<sup>590</sup>

The call to ‘live with the truth’ was gaining strength in Ukraine years before the Orange revolution. A predecessor of the famous Pora was the student movement “Za Pravdu!” (For Truth!). It was launched in January 2001, in the midst of the loud ‘tape scandal’ (a.k.a. the Kuchmagate) -- when recordings of Kuchma’s conversations allegedly made by his bodyguard became public and implicated the president in ordering the murder of Georgiy Gongadze, among his other dark business. The students demanded truth to be told in the Gongadze affair; but their motto had a wider meaning as well – a demand of truth as the moral standard for Ukraine’s politics and society.

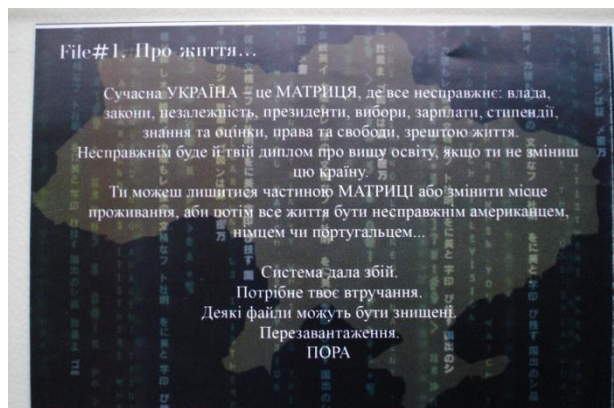
Three years later, this theme was powerfully developed in Pora campaign materials. The ideas and practices of Pora campaign in the spring and summer of 2004 are reminiscent of the principles of ‘antipolitics’ as moral opposition

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<sup>590</sup> Yulia Mostovaia. “Suffocating” (Russian: «Нечем Дышать»), *Zerkalo Nedeli*, Dec. 20, 2003.

## Exhibit 7. 4.a: “The MATRIX” theme in Pora 2004 campaign materials

TOP: a web-posted collage. Bottom: a printed handout (English translation in the side box).



**IT'S TIME** to live a real life. Stop fooling yourself. Everything must be real: beer and coffee, joy and sorrow, the words you are saying, your friends and your Motherland. Today's Ukraine is a "Matrix" where all is unreal: authority, laws, independence, presidents, elections, wages, knowledge and grades, rights and liberties, even life itself. It's time to learn to live. It's time to choose."

to the regime,<sup>591</sup> and of the efforts to educate ‘the greengrocers’ that were made by KOR, Charter 77, and other civil society organizations that had prepared the revolutions of 1989.

Likewise, Pora saw its mission in motivating the society towards a revolution and tried “to actualize the public demand for change.”<sup>592</sup> But they did not intend to lead crowds in a revolution nor make a ‘revolution plan’ for the election day. In fact, Pora never campaigned for Yushchenko as their candidate. They produced and disseminated a series of flyers exposing ‘Kuchmizm’ as a system synonymous with ‘unemployment, criminality, poverty, corruption, and hopelessness.’<sup>593</sup> They also carried out many street performances and interactive events, much in the style of the Orange Alternative in Poland.

One of the flyers produced by Pora employs the theme of then fashionable blockbuster “The Matrix”: the image of two pills on open palms, offering the choice of either ‘the old life’ of simulated reality or a path to the truth – which starts with the pill that bears Pora logo. The opposite page of the flyer looks like a computer screen with the text: “File #1. Today’s Ukraine is the MATRIX where everything is fake: power, laws, independence, presidents, elections, wages, learning, grades, rights and liberties, even life itself. Stop fooling yourself. It’s time to live a real life. It’s time to choose.”

While the public attitudes to the election and the agenda of change were shaped by a multitude of factors, the messages of Pora definitely helped to

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<sup>591</sup> Gyorgy Konrad. Antipolitics. In: Gale Stokes. *From Stalinism to Pluralism*, Oxford University Press, 1996.

<sup>592</sup> Oleksiy Tolkachov, *ibid.*

<sup>593</sup> *Ibid.*

frame them for those who came out on the streets. Neither Pora, nor Yushchenko campaign headquarters expected the massive turnout on the first day of the protests on Kiev's central square. There are indications that both of the competing sides were "genuinely surprised by the scale, persistence, and devotion of the crowds" there.<sup>594</sup> The total number of people who came out on the streets to take part in rallies and protests is estimated at nearly 5.5 million – which was roughly 15% of the country's adult population.<sup>595</sup>

This was a moment of redemption for Ukraine's 'greengrocer society', as reflected in the name given to the Orange revolution by Aleksander Kwasniewski (who closely observed it as well as mediated the round table talks in Kiev). He called it "the revolution of dignity."<sup>596</sup> Yushchenko voters were not driven by a single coherent ideology<sup>597</sup>. What united them was the rejection of the Kuchmist system and a hope to have its wrongs corrected. This was eloquently emphasized by Zbigniew Brzezinski:

The Orange revolution was a revolution of hope, of genuine hope, and, in many respects, also abstract hope [...] It was in a sense a moment in which a transcendent shared sense of national identity defined in democratic content became a common property of the Ukrainian people. It was a mood, it was a faith, it was an aspiration, it was a desire and it was also very much a determination. [...] In many respects

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<sup>594</sup> Georgiy Kasianov. Orange Revolution: Several Observations about the Nature of Things, *The Action Ukraine Report*, No. 660, Feb. 15, 2006.

<sup>595</sup> Estimate made by Irina Bekeshkina, *Ukrainska Pravda*, Nov. 22, 2009.

<sup>596</sup> Interview to the *Zerkalo Nedeli*, March 26, 2005.

<sup>597</sup> Mikhail Dubiniansky discusses the constituency of Yushchenko voters as a situational alliance of groups holding largely incompatible views: from liberals and modernizers to nationalists and egalitarianists: Mikhail Dubiniansky, *The Orange Mobilization* (in Russian), *Ukrainska Pravda*, January 12, 2010.

ephemeral and yet vital, it is something that has to be honored, treasured, and respected.”<sup>598</sup>

The Orange Revolution dealt a strong blow to the post-Soviet culture of submissive fear. It would not have been possible without genuine grass-root action, which became epitomized by the “orange ribbon initiative” – when citizens not even affiliated with Yushchenko campaign organizations came up with the idea to wear orange as a sign of their civic solidarity.<sup>599</sup> The orange ribbon initiative became the turning point in mass mobilization for the revolution. To begin wearing an orange ribbon (or sweater, or scarf) instantly became a statement of civic dignity: “I do not fear! I am a free person!” Andriy Bondar, a Ukrainian writer, recalls those days as ‘an orange epidemic’ explaining that it created an instant sense of solidarity and hearty trust among strangers – and that was a unique and new feeling for many Ukrainians.<sup>600</sup> In Bondar’s view, “the anthropology of the Orange Revolution” remains its biggest accomplishment. Bondar also emphasizes that the experience of great emotional uplifting in the Orange revolution made as much impact on the minds of Ukrainians as the Prague Spring on Czechs or the 1981 Solidarity campaign on Poles.

Yet, the Orange Revolution carnival also played a function of medieval European carnivals by being a “safety valve”– because the revolution of a carnival is

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<sup>598</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski. Speech delivered at Roundtable “Ukraine’s Transition to an Established National Identity and the Orange Revolution”

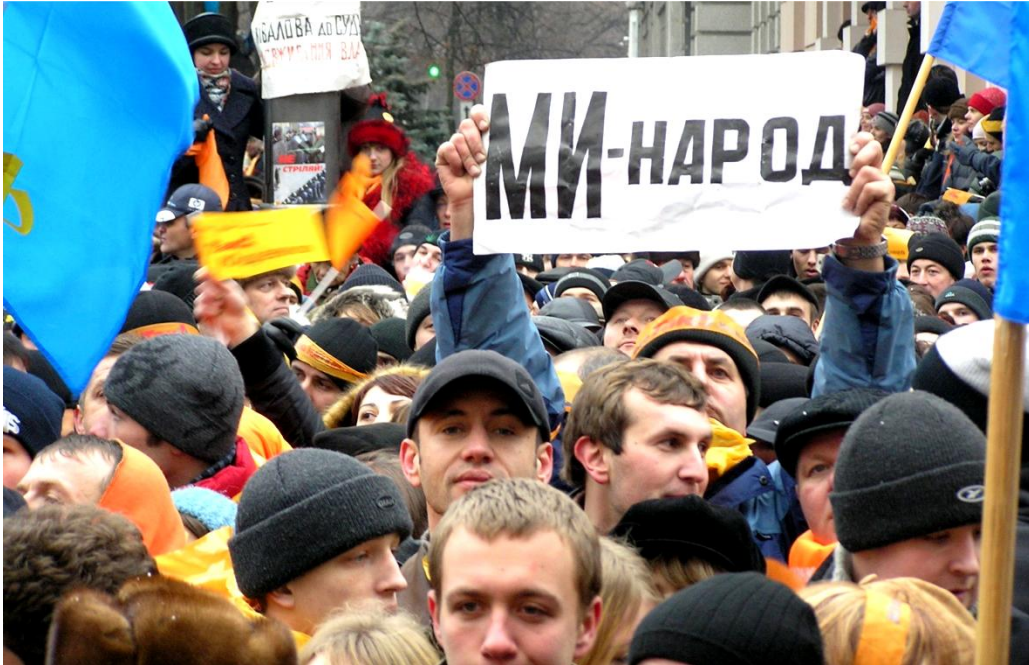
<sup>599</sup> Discussed in greater detail in: Peter Voitsekhovsky. “In the Footsteps of 1989...”, pp. 551-554.

<sup>600</sup> Andriy Bondar. Exoneraton of the Revolution. *Ukrainska Pravda*, Jan. 22, 2010.



### Exhibit 7.4.b: “Anthropology of the Orange Revolution.”

In the words of a prominent writer, “the anthropology” of the Orange Revolution was its biggest accomplishment. The rallies brought an instant sense of solidarity and trust – a unique and new feeling for many Ukrainians. Hand-made motto says: “We are the people.” (Photos by Konstantin Golubchik and the *Korrespondent*.)





phony, enacted, and only perpetuates the status quo.<sup>601</sup> The carnival of the Orange Revolution was very optimistic; but it did not result in any significant institutional changes for the country, unlike this was in Poland, Czechoslovakia, or Hungary.

One critical aspect that made the Orange revolution different from the revolutions of 1989 was the role of critical intellectuals. In 2004, Ukraine had no political leaders of great intellectual and moral authority that had come from outside the old system, similar to Walesa, Michnik, or Havel. Viktor Yushchenko became the iconic spiritual leader in 2004 because he was intuitively perceived as one that differed from all others in the government; he was the only one that seemed honest, moral, hearty, and unselfish. Two years earlier, Yulia Mostovaia spoke of Yushchenko as ‘the Ukrainian Havel,’ also adding that the two leaders were as much different as their respective societies.<sup>602</sup>

However, Yushchenko’s rule also became the biggest disappointment for his inspired supporters; so many hopes were defeated. The grass-root movement that brought him to power remained separated from “the party of power” – which was formally established by the government bureaucracy under the name of “People’s Union ‘Our Ukraine.’”<sup>603</sup> Enthusiasm and hope were replaced by growing frustration and cynicism. By the end of his rule, Yushchenko’s approval rate was less than 10%, and he gained only 5.4% of the vote when attempting to run for a second presidential term in January 2010.

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<sup>601</sup> The two ways of looking at carnivals (the optimistic perspective of Mikhail Bakhtin and the pessimistic perspective of Umberto Eco) are discussed in: Christoph Neidhart, *Russia’s Carnival: the Smells, Sights, and Sounds of Transition*, Rowman and Littlefield, 2003; pp. 3-5).

<sup>602</sup> *Zerkalo Nedeli*, No. 6, February 16, 2002.

<sup>603</sup> See section 3.1. for details.

Looking back, former enthusiasts of the Orange Revolution see its main accomplishment in the “exacerbation of political and social ills” – which is positive because “exacerbation is a step to recovery.” As a young blogger explains, “Now we have seen how ugly the system is. We realize that it is wrong. Freedom of speech has given us the opportunity to speak openly. The more open information goes around, the more food for thought we get. Open fractures are easier to heal.”<sup>604</sup>

But a part of post-Orange disenchantment was due to the realization that the freedom to speak openly did not make political debates more substantive. In fact, the opposite took place – party contestation became more dispirited and virtualized.<sup>605</sup> This feeling resulted in the growth of “against all” attitude. Some opinion leaders voiced out “the manifesto of ordinary voters: we don’t believe in politicians and refuse to go to their rallies!”<sup>606</sup> Others blamed the mindset of the voters maintaining that it was still “Orwellian”:

“Our voters’ attitudes surpass Orwell’s imagination! We independently mastered the skill of doublethink, and we practice it every minute. How does it happen that those who are the most vehemently criticized and hated become the leaders in an electoral race? The result is predetermined, no matter who gets to be the winner. We have to choose between the two evils – because we choose inside a circle that can only contain evil. Apparently, we want to go on living that way. We fear to confess, but we do not really want change; we are quite content with the existing system – old, rotten, perverse, but so habitual.”<sup>607</sup>

Post-Orange politics is now compared to “the world of simulacra in which even a small genuine act becomes a ray of light in the dark.” Those genuine

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<sup>604</sup> Dmytro Sinchenko. I never had illusions. *Ukrainska Pravda*, February 18, 2010.

<sup>605</sup> Discussed in more detail in the previous section (4.2).

<sup>606</sup> Pavlo Severin. *Ukrainska Pravda*, April 2010,

<sup>607</sup> Pen-named blogger “FriedricH,” posted on January 13, 2010 at URL: [http://durdom.in.ua/uk/main/article/article\\_id/3103.phtml](http://durdom.in.ua/uk/main/article/article_id/3103.phtml)

but weak and low-numbered activist groups become conspicuous because the society still has a demand for “normal politics, normal civic organizations, and for parties that look like real parties.”<sup>608</sup> That fac\*tor is commonly named as the reason why a radical party like Svoboda was able to earn considerable support among moderate mainstream voters: it earned their sympathy just because it “looks and acts like a real political party rather than a privately held company – no matter what their program says.”<sup>609</sup>

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<sup>608</sup> Viktor Tregubov, *ibid.*

<sup>609</sup> Tregubov, *ibid.*

## CHAPTER 8

### DOUBLETHINK AND POST-SOVIET POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

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#### 8.1. Legacies of the Nomenklatura

The collapse of communist regimes did not result in a complete turnover of the political class. In the countries of East Central Europe, “essential continuity of elites” was deemed to be a factor that facilitated the progress of democracy – because the established elites did not perceive it as a threat. However, researchers note a distinction between “moderate” and “high” degrees of elite continuity, and assume that there was a certain “threshold” beyond which elite continuity was inhibiting democratic progress.<sup>610</sup>

Continuity of political elites in post-Soviet polities falls into the “high degree” category. A study made in 2003 – over a decade after the fall of Soviet communism – showed that former nomenklatura members occupied 73% of the most influential positions in the offices of national government and comprised 80% of province governors in Ukraine.<sup>611</sup> Without exception, all heads of state, from Leonid Kravchuk to Viktor Yanukovich, were shaped by their nomenklatura past; the same

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<sup>610</sup> John Higley, Judith Kullberg, and Jan Pakulski. The persistence of Postcommunist Elites. *Journal of Democracy*, 7(2), 1996, p. 137-138.

<sup>611</sup> Igor Zhdanov and Yuri Yakimenko, Challenges for Political Elites in the XXI Century. *Zerkalo Nedeli*, #44, 2003 (in Russian).

applies with a single exception, to heads of the legislature and the executive government.<sup>612</sup>

Experts anticipated that massive generational change in the political elites would modernize the quality of Ukraine's politics. That generational change has evolved slower than expected; but most importantly, it did not bring expected improvements. It is commonly held that "the quality of Ukraine's elites deteriorates with each new election."<sup>613</sup> Younger generation office holders are better educated but they "do not demonstrate a different way of thinking." Rent-seeking behavior rose to a higher scale; young executive leaders "no longer take bribes in enveloped cash, but use offshore bank accounts instead."<sup>614</sup> Cultural continuity in leadership continues to show how right was Robert C. Tucker when he emphasized a long time ago that "the end of the Soviet Union as a state formation [...] did not mean the end of the long-ingrained patterns of thought and conduct that formed in their entirety the Soviet political culture."<sup>615</sup>

A fundamental premise of that culture, as discussed earlier in Chapter 1, is a pre-modern understanding of power. "Our voter firmly knows that 'the power' cannot be elected; it is not produced by public trust," observes a Ukrainian publicist.

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<sup>612</sup> The single exception is Arseniy Yatseniuk, who briefly held the office of the parliament speaker at the age of 34 (in 2008), but was forced to resign due to heavy factional fights.

<sup>613</sup> Oleg Rybachuk remarked in a recent interview that "everybody agreed" with that point made by Zbigniew Brzezinski. (Interview to UNIAN, December 23, 2011).

<sup>614</sup> Rybachuk, *ibid.*

<sup>615</sup> Robert C. Tucker. *Post-Soviet Leadership and Change*. Timothy J. Colton and Robert C. Tucker (eds.) *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership*. Westview Press, 1995, p. 237.

Such implied “ascriptive status” of power holders creates low democratic demand; many voters feel that it is best to support those who have the power so that they would “do something for the people.”<sup>616</sup> In shortage of democratic demand, successful leaders continue to be guided by “Soviet managerial culture” which can be defined for the modern-day environment as a set of four principles.<sup>617</sup> The first of them is the understanding of power as property (consistently with Yegor Gaidar’s analysis).<sup>618</sup> Power gives informal control of property which trumps formal ownership rights. The second tenet of “Soviet” managerial thinking is the belief that administrative controls work better than economic incentives. Third, it does not rely on formal law, but believes in informal incentives and threats instead. Fourth, it favors monopoly over competition.

This “code of leadership” helps to understand why the emergent post-Soviet order took on the character of “so-called nomenklatura capitalism.”<sup>619</sup> A Russian thinker remarks that “*their* capitalism comes out to be as Stalinist as *their* socialism was – because it is so primitive, blunt, and inhuman.”<sup>620</sup>

Nomenklatura capitalism is based on access to political leadership as a tool to distribute the “resources of the state” (such as energy consumption quotas, price subsidies, all kinds of licenses and permits, tax benefits, government contracts, etc.). In Ukraine under President Kuchma, the system of nomenklatura capitalists –

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<sup>616</sup> Vladimir Zolotarev, Dialog.ua, December 11, 2003.

<sup>617</sup> Proposed by Aleksandr Paskhaver, Zerkalo Nedeli, December 10, 2012.

<sup>618</sup> See Chapter 1, section 1.3.b.

<sup>619</sup> Robert C. Tucker. Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>620</sup> Lev Rubinstein, Grani.Ru, July 21, 2011.

a.k.a. the oligarchs – emerged with the president as the political patron and arbiter for the competing clans. Their competition eventually created a peculiar form of political pluralism where those with disadvantaged access to “the resources” emerged as the political opposition. Under Viktor Yushchenko, the system of presidential arbitration was shaken; Yushchenko “was either unable or unwilling” to function as the resource distribution arbiter.<sup>621</sup> Clan rivalry acquired more open forms of party competition and parliamentary lobbyism, but its externally democratic forms did not change the underlying essence of the struggle. Instead of setting up a transparent system of rules with “an even playing field” and debating about competing ideas in the pursuit of the social interest, parliamentary factions continue to be driven by shadow interests in the distribution of patronage.<sup>622</sup>

Such duplicity of political form and meaning generates the post-Soviet phenomenon of “virtual politics” and “façade democracy.” Deceit becomes the underlying principle of governance, notes Andrei Kolesnikov, one of the brightest Russian political commentators.<sup>623</sup> The system makes hurdles for the development of genuine mass-based parties and produces fake entities with that name. Instead of genuine grass root movements, the system creates fake organizations that imitate public enthusiasm in support of government.<sup>624</sup> Instead of truly open governance, it creates “public councils” that imitate accountability.

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<sup>621</sup> In the analysis of Vadim Karasev (interview to UNIAN, August 2, 2010).

<sup>622</sup> Karasev, *ibid.*

<sup>623</sup> Kolesnikov, *Novaya gazeta*, October 20, 2011.

<sup>624</sup> Some of the examples are the Kremlin-propped movement “Nashi” (“Ours”) that attempted to demonstrate young people’s enthusiastic support for Vladimir Putin and

The value system of the post-Soviet political elites is interpreted as a “symbiosis” of two sets of principles: those of the old nomenklatura with its privileged class mentality and those of the new adventurous business leaders with their neglect for the law. Blended together, they accounted for the triumph of corporate interest and corruption. Their notions also became the model for the disoriented society at large promoting duplicity as the social norm. The leaders would commonly declare high moral standards but were seen violating those standards for blunt personal gain. This demoralized many young people who were getting convinced that success is incompatible with moral scruple.<sup>625</sup>

Due to the shortage of public demand, political leadership in Ukraine is now perceived as “artificial and fake.”<sup>626</sup> Name recognition and approval rates of today’s “leaders” are pumped up by the television. Therefore, observes an expert, “one can get the impression that Ukraine’s political leaders are appointed: the oligarchic make casting auditions and then choose those for whom the right image would be molded: a liberal, a democrat, a Russia sympathizer, etc.”<sup>627</sup> As an example, regular invitations to Friday night talk shows have boosted popularity rankings from single to double digits for Arseniy Yatseniuk and for Sergiy Tigipko in 2009 and 2010. The Svoboda party leader, Oleh Tyahnybok, was reportedly advised

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similar projects in Ukraine, e.g. “The Young Regions.” The public reacted to their activities by the new witticism: “The strongest signal about problems in society is mass rallies in support of the government.”

<sup>625</sup> Zhdanov and Yakimenko, *ibid.*

<sup>626</sup> Zolotarev, *ibid.*

<sup>627</sup> Bogdan Kushnir, *Ukrainska Pravda*, December 6, 2010.



to throw a pack of yogurt at his opponent in a live TV debate – which, he was told, would instantly raise his approval rate by 5% or more.<sup>628</sup>

The fakeness of such leadership is also visible in the efforts of the new ruling class to collect various external signs of merit recognition – in the form of state decorations, honorary titles, high academic degrees, published books, and membership in select clubs or associations. However, this trait is often ridiculed because honorary titles inherited from the Soviet tradition have become meaningless, academic degrees are known to be traded, publications are commonly plagiarized, and select clubs turn out to be phony. Scandals on those subjects abound in the Ukrainian and Russian media, but in very few instances did they have any result at all.<sup>629</sup>

Another way for the ruling class self-assertion is their demonstrative luxury. Elected officials and even law enforcement officers do not hesitate to demonstrate consumption that often exceeds their declared income (see more in Chapters 3 and 4). Their lust for luxury watches and limos, as well as palaces and yachts makes a stark contrast with the living standards of their voters, and has been an embarrassment to their counterparts in European capitals. This lifestyle can be reminiscent of the U.S. “robber barons” of late 19<sup>th</sup> century – and some of the Ukrainian oligarchs proudly insist on such a parallel in their favor; they appear

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<sup>628</sup> Ibid.

<sup>629</sup> Among the most notable examples are the phony “professorship” of Viktor Yanukovich (who misspelled his own title as “proFFesor” in a hand-written form) and the scholarly transgressions of the former speaker of the Rada, Volodymyr Lytvyn who was caught plagiarizing from published works and speeches by international celebrities such as Thomas Carothers and Steve Jobs, as well as from publications of domestic scholars.

genuinely convinced that Ukraine's Party of Regions is moving along the path earlier travelled by the party of Abraham Lincoln.<sup>630</sup>

But unlike the U.S. industrial tycoons, post-Soviet oligarchs acquired their assets from the state in shady privatization deals. They are driven by pre-modern mercantilist ideas, both in their economic activities and in their personal lifestyles.<sup>631</sup>

The style of the post-Soviet ruling class is described first and foremost as “glamour”—in the sense of “striking deliberateness” of varnished luxury.<sup>632</sup> A celebrated Russian satirist notes that post-Soviet “glamour” is grounded in doublethink – because it includes a degree of self-irony that keeps uttered words distanced from acts. The members of the vogue circle “imitate self-irony and advanced mindsets: it's like we all understand everything about ourselves and about our times; our glamour is not luxury, nor wealth, nor loyalty -- it is all total imitation.”<sup>633</sup>

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<sup>630</sup> Simon Shuster. An Introduction to Democracy with Ukrainian Characteristics. *Time Magazine*, October 29, 2012.

<sup>631</sup> Mykhailo Nichoga. *Ukrainska Pravda*, February 28, 2011.

<sup>632</sup> Dmitry Vydrin. *Ukrainska Pravda*, April 1, 2008.

<sup>633</sup> Dmitry Bykov. *Novaya Gazeta*. September 29, 2010.

## **8.2. Virtuosi of Doublethink: Selected Examples**

The important role of doublethink in shaping the political culture of Ukraine's post-Soviet leadership can be examined in greater detail at the level of individual leaders. This section presents an analysis of political culture traits pertaining to three consecutive presidents of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, Leonid Kuchma, and Viktor Yushchenko.

### ***Kravchuk and Kuchma: the architects of the “blackmail state”***

Kuchma's predecessor, Leonid Kravchuk, was Ukraine's first president and held that office for only two and a half years. A career functionary of the Communist Party, he headed the conversion of the mainstream party bureaucrats to “national communism” before the collapse of the Soviet Union – which meant an abrupt switch of ideological allies and adversaries in a truly Orwellian fashion. Kravchuk's skill of political flexibility is reflected in the famous joke: while it is raining, President Kravchuk refuses to take an umbrella saying he can “just zigzag in between the raindrops.”<sup>634</sup> Looking back, Ukraine's leading publicist remarks that there has been little difference between “Kravchuk's time of prevarication, Kuchma's time of lies, and Yushchenko's time of hypocrisy.”<sup>635</sup> But it was Kuchma who truly designed Ukraine's post-Soviet power system that was only modified but not replaced

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<sup>634</sup> Leonid Kravchuk was known to like that joke and tell it to others on many occasions.

<sup>635</sup> Sergei Rakhmanin. Zerkalo Nedeli, January 27, 2010.

in the aftermath of his rule – when presidency was taken over, consecutively, by each of his two hand-picked successors, Viktor Yushchenko and Viktor Yanukovich.

Kuchma's leadership style was shaped by his experience as an industrial manager and a communist party bureaucrat. In that capacity, he was fully trained by the nomenklatura school of bureaucratic intrigue described by Mikhail Voslensky.<sup>636</sup> As a Soviet industry manager, he strongly believed in overwhelming authoritarian control of every component of the system subordinated to him. A scholar who used to be a young analyst in Kuchma's presidential staff recalls how he was surprised to see that the president's order were "never fulfilled accurately and timely." Eventually, he realized that what mattered for Leonid Kuchma was to see obedience, but he did not expect much in terms of its quality.<sup>637</sup>

At the time of the Soviet system collapse, Kuchma was among the most influential "red directors" in Ukraine.<sup>638</sup> Dmitry Vydrin testifies that in those days many of the "red directors" were absorbed in reading Mario Puzo's "Godfather" – they read it like a handbook, with colored pencil marks. He remembers seeing one sentence especially highlighted: "Strength is the absence of restrictions." In Vydrin's view, that became the underlying principle for the whole epoch of the Kuchma presidency. Kuchma "continuously fought against any restrictions for his power: if the restriction came from a law, then the law had to be circumvented; if the restriction

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<sup>636</sup> See section 1.3.b of Chapter 1.

<sup>637</sup> Dmitry Vydrin. *Zerkalo Nedeli*, #37, 2003.

<sup>638</sup> The common name for managers of big industrial assets who formed the class controlling most of the nation's property in the early 1990s.

came from the public opinion, it had to be ignored and falsified; moral restrictions did not matter at all.”<sup>639</sup>

Kuchma’s nomenklatura experience and power instincts helped him to easily change his declared political goals. While he was running for presidency in 1994, his “winning proposition” was to support the Russian language in Ukraine and make the country officially bilingual. But he immediately dropped that rhetoric after he became the president. He even converted to speaking clumsy Ukrainian in public (while continuing to speak Russian in private – as demonstrated by the Melnychenko tapes).<sup>640</sup> Five years later, Kuchma successfully assumed the opposite electoral image – that of the defender of the Ukrainian identity against “the Russian threat.” At the same time, Kuchma, as well as Kravchuk before him and Yushchenko for several years after him, was presiding over “the great project of amnesia” refusing to rethink the Soviet past and to “de-Sovietize” the collective mind.<sup>641</sup> In 1995, Kuchma energetically proclaimed “market reforms,” “investment support,” and “innovation” – but in reality, he promoted crony capitalism based on clans of the “offshore aristocracy” where no investor could do business without establishing clientelist

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<sup>639</sup> Vydrin, *ibid.*

<sup>640</sup> A former officer of Kuchma’s security detail, Mykola Melnychenko produced secretly made audio recordings of Kuchma’s private conversations which implicated the president in ordering abduction and intimidation of his political opponents, instructing heads of law enforcement agencies on how to blackmail local administration chiefs to ensure Kuchma’s re-election, as well as in other crimes. The “tape scandal” erupted in the Supreme Rada on November 28, 2000 but did not lead to Kuchma’s resignation or impeachment.

<sup>641</sup> More in section 1.4 of Chapter 1.

connections in the government.<sup>642</sup> In foreign policy, Kuchma maintained a balancing act between “special relations” with Russia and amorphous “friendliness” with the West – what his advisors described as a “multi-vector policy” but what essentially became “a study in ambiguity.”

Kuchma was also characterized as a master of venturous political schemes. Until 2002, he argued that a “parliamentary model” of government was not fit for Ukraine; then in 2003 he made a roundabout turn and proposed it as the country’s best choice – in the expectation that he would assume the Prime Minister position after the end of his presidential term.<sup>643</sup> That was, apparently, Kuchma’s plan A for staying in power. His plan B, as confirmed by various sources, was even more cunning. Kuchma facilitated the rise of Viktor Yushchenko to the role of the opposition leader who maintained significant personal loyalty to him. He also handpicked Viktor Yanukovych as his official “successor” for the 2004 presidential elections – the candidate whom many perceived as “the bigger evil” than other figures in the “party of power.”<sup>644</sup> It is commonly believed that Kuchma anticipated a clash between Yushchenko and Yanukovych supporters and intended to use the

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<sup>642</sup> Vitaly Vrublevsky. Presidential Portraits in the Frame of History. *Den*, December 8, 2005.

<sup>643</sup> That plan was implemented as a part of the “political compromise” in December 2004 and resulted in increased institutional rivalry between the president and the prime minister in 2006-2010.

<sup>644</sup> Yanukovych was antagonizing many voters outside his own region, Donbass, by his past criminal record as well his low-educated style. There is evidence that in 2004 some Russophonic voters supported Yushchenko because they were against Yanukovych; but they would have voted for another Kuchmist candidate – for instance, Sergei Tigipko.

post-electoral conflict as the reason to nullify the elections – so that he would stay in power. But he did not anticipate that the public protest would be so strong, and that it would be targeted against himself personally as much as against the candidacy of Viktor Yanukovich.

***Viktor Yushchenko: the Hamlet of Ukrainian politics?***

Viktor Yushchenko's political orbit has many parallels with the fate of Mikhail Gorbachev. Like Gorbachev, he rose to power as a career bureaucrat; he was favored and handpicked by the country's top leader (in Gorbachev's case, this was Andropov, in Yushchenko's case, Kuchma) to be the "reformist young hope" of the system. Like Gorbachev, Yushchenko gained unprecedented credit of people's trust for projecting the image of a "bureaucrat with a human face." He likewise quickly fell out of favor with the masses when their admiration was followed by frustration and disenchantment. When Gorbachev ran for presidency of Russia in 1996, he gained 0.54% of the vote. Yushchenko and his party gained 1.5% in the parliamentary elections of 2012.

Both Gorbachev and Yushchenko epitomized doublethink in their wavering and inconsistent messages and deeds. Gorbachev was criticized for attempting to be "the Pope and Luther" at the same time.<sup>645</sup> Yushchenko pledged to

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<sup>645</sup> See section 1.3.b in Chapter 1 for a more detailed discussion.

dismantle “the criminal system” of corrupt power and restore justice and accountability in governance. But instead, he had “one kind of hypocrisy replaced with another”<sup>646</sup> and allowed a surge of corruption to unprecedented levels.<sup>647</sup>

Yushchenko’s political personality used to be described as enigmatic: he was called “the Hamlet of Ukrainian politics,”<sup>648</sup> “a Ukrainian Havel,”<sup>649</sup> and “Plato’s ideal philosopher king.”<sup>650</sup> In one of the most elaborate studies available, Yushchenko was characterized as “completely weaved out of irreconcilable contradictions – which, however is not a sign of inconsistency, but simply a reflection of his specific type of thinking.”<sup>651</sup> This type of thinking was akin to characters in Chekhov’s plays – beautiful dreamers who “evade action;” likewise, Yushchenko’s political behavior was based on “evading action” and “charismatic understatement.” The author of that analysis noted that this was a peculiar type of leadership based on “sacral and esoteric faith.” In his opinion, there was much in common between the public perception of Yushchenko and Putin: both were enigmatic “presidents of hope,” with each voter reading that hope in his or her

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<sup>646</sup> Sergei Rakhmanin. *Zerkalo Nedeli*, January 22, 2010.

<sup>647</sup> Igor Losev. *Ukrainska Pravda*, July 23, 2010.

<sup>648</sup> James Mace. Commentary published on *ArtUkraine.com*, January 16, 2004.

<sup>649</sup> Yulia Mostovaia made that comparison in 2002 and was since repeatedly quoted.

<sup>650</sup> Olesia Yakhno, *Ukrainska Pravda*, May 28, 2008.

<sup>651</sup> Andrei Okara *Obozrevatel*, March 23, 2006.



particular way. Moreover, Yushchenko could be seen as a “piggy bank of other people’s hopes and illusions.”<sup>652</sup>

Those qualities facilitated Yushchenko’s victory despite tremendous pressure from the administrative machine of the “blackmail state.” At the same time, they made his image easy to ruin after he achieved the electoral victory. Yushchenko’s former supporters eventually criticized him for inappropriately messianic tone implying that “the little Ukrainians” were not “initiated” into his special wisdom.<sup>653</sup> More importantly, many accused him of “breaking the promises” to do away with clan politics, cronyism, and corruption. Officials whom he had accused of election fraud in 2004 received state awards after he became the president. Despite Yushchenko’s calls to unite the nation, his presidency left it more polarized than before; he was rejected by the majority of Russian-speaking Ukrainians, which also played in favor of his political opponent Yanukovich. Looking back, it is fair to say that Yushchenko’s attempts to reform the Kuchmist system collapsed for the same reasons as Gorbachev’s perestroika: his cultural roots in “the Soviet ruling class” made him unfit for an “open system” of politics where, in addition to declaring slogans, a leader had to be able to negotiate and persuade.<sup>654</sup>

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<sup>652</sup> Ibid.

<sup>653</sup> Egor Checherinda, *Ukrainska Pravda*, July 13, 2010.

<sup>654</sup> This point was discussed by Guy Sorman as a major shortcoming of Mikhail Gorbachev and his team (see Chapter 1, section 1.3.b).

## CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

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Post-Soviet societies are plagued by anti-modern cultural legacies inherited from Soviet and pre-Soviet past. Their core syndrome can be described as doublethink – a mechanism of mental adaption that accepts mutually exclusive concepts without perceiving a conflict between them. This results in blurred boundaries between truth and falseness, between right and wrong, between acceptable and non-acceptable behavior.

Doublethink was the condition of life under the Soviet system. It is perpetuated in post-Soviet societies in patterns of prevarication and equivocation that characterize the thinking and behavior of both the elites and the masses. Doublethink is also manifested in incongruous values and duplicitous rules that prevail in society.

This core syndrome penetrates the political life and significantly impacts the character of modern democratic institutions. In part, doublethink enhances the imitative and simulative character of post-Soviet political parties. They operate in a topsy-turvy world of imitated supply and deluded demand and perform like “post-Orwellian” machines of virtual politics.

What does this tell us about the future of political parties in Ukraine and Russia? Ukraine’s situation clearly shows a stalemate for further advances of personalistic parties such as those in the former Orange coalition. They have lost much credibility with their voters. All available information indicates that there is demand for genuine representation and linkage, both in Ukraine and in Russia.

But European-style programmatic parties of liberal or social-democratic orientation are yet to come. One problem appears to be the shortage of competent and trustworthy party leadership. Another problem is all parties' complete dependence on non-transparent funding from rich sponsors.

For now, the only positive dynamics is in the trend towards a mass-based party of nationalist type (Svoboda). It is sometimes mistakenly interpreted as a sign of electoral demand for authoritarian supply. But this demand can be better understood in the light of contrast between Svoboda's style of "genuine activism" and other parties' imitative technologies.

Grass-root civil society groups also show examples of genuine civic activism, but they obviously cannot serve as an adequate alternative to political parties as vehicles of political representation and mobilization.

Changes in electoral law alone cannot deliver a change in political culture. In 2006, Orange coalition parties insisted on the transition to party-list proportional election system. This was believed to be a tool for strengthening party institutionalization. Instead, that change of electoral law resulted in significant growth of virtual politics because party bosses obtained tremendous influence and did not want to be accountable either to their own factions or to the voters at large. In 2012, the electoral law was changed back to half proportional, half majoritarian representation. As anticipated, this resulted in a greater number of local clientelistic machines, predominantly in some rural districts. But those instances received visibility in the media, and similar attempts in many urban districts, especially in the

capital city of Kiev, were not successful – machines of gifts, favors, and administrative pressure were unable to win plurality vote.

Emancipation from doublethink will logically occur with embracing the values of modernity. The educated urban class will clearly lead in this process. It will take more time to be completed, but the changing character of civil society discourse in the aftermath of Viktor Yanukovich electoral victory of 2010 makes some indication of that.

The economic and political power of “the oligarchs” – or big business clans – remains a major factor. For this reason, it is deemed useful to examine their political role in greater detail as a next step of this project. This next step of research would draw a comparison between the political role of business tycoons in modern Ukraine and Russia and the “political bosses” of the Gilded Age in the US. The question to ask would be: how can the U.S. experience of transition from Gilded Age to Progressive Era inform the post-Soviet project of political modernization? It appears that important structural similarities can be found; but such a comparison would also emphasize that post-Soviet societies face their specific challenge of realignment with the path of modernity by emancipating from the bondage of doublethink.

## **APPENDIX 1.**

### **VALUE LEGACIES AND TRANSITION SUCCESS: A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS.**

#### **Abstract**

This study uses 1990 World Values Survey data to measure the degree of entrenchment of "Leninist" value legacies in post-communist societies at the starting time of transition. It checks the hypothesis that countries with less entrenched "Leninist" value legacies get better scores in transformation progress indices compiled by acknowledged monitoring organizations. Four different indices are used for comparison and verification purposes (those of the Freedom House, the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Heritage Foundation). The data sample includes 21 postcommunist countries of Europe and the former Soviet Union. Relevant questions and responses were selected in the survey, then response frequencies for each country aggregated into group means for "consolidated democracies" and "transitional societies." Group means were compared by using t-test for equality of independent means. Variables showing the most significant differences between the two groups were used in building linear regression models. The obtained results confirm that the countries where postcommunist transition has been more successful had a lower level of entrenched paternalistic expectations and egalitarian distributional expectations at the starting time of transition. Linear regression models with those two variables explain up to 75% of variance in transformation success indices among the study sample countries.

<b>Table 1. Comparison of independent variables' means for "consolidated democracies" and "transitional societies"</b>			
	Consolidated democracies *	Transitional societies**	T-test significance (2- tailed)
Reliance on government	43.6%	57.3%	.018
Reliance on oneself	32.1%	22.1%	.033
Positive sense of control over one's life	48.0%	39.0%	.006
Lack of control over one's life	16.6%	28.0%	.000
Desire of greater income incentives	67.8%	47.8%	.002
Desire of greater income equality	18.3%	26.6%	.093
Approval of competition	76.6%	68.3%	.038
Disapproval of competition	9.0%	11.1%	.260
Desire for more local participation	19.0%	11.2%	.008
*) Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia			
**) Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Ukraine			

**Table 2. Perception of having “FREE CHOICE AND CONTROL OVER ONE'S LIFE” in post-communist societies.  
Selected results from 1990 World Values Survey**

QUESTION 66. SOME PEOPLE FEEL THEY HAVE COMPLETELY FREE CHOICE AND CONTROL OVER THEIR LIVES. WHILE OTHER PEOPLE FEEL THAT WHAT THEY DO HAS NO REAL EFFECT ON WHAT HAPPENS TO THEM. PLEASE USE THIS SCALE WHERE 1 MEANS "NONE AT ALL" AND 10 MEANS "A GREAT DEAL" TO INDICATE HOW MUCH FREEDOM OF CHOICE AND CONTROL YOU FEEL YOU HAVE OVER THE WAY YOUR LIFE TURNS OUT

**GROUP 1 ("CONSOLIDATED DEMOCRACIES")**

	CZECH REP.	ESTONIA	HUNGARY	LATVIA	LITHUANIA	POLAND	SLOVAKIA	SLOVENIA	GROUP 1 MEAN	T-TEST SIGNIFICANCE FOR EQUALITY OF GROUP 1 AND 2 MEANS
<b>LITTLE (1-4)</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>.000</b>
MEDIUM (5-6)	39	32	35	35	30	30	39	43		
<b>PLENTRY (7-10)</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>48.0</b>	<b>.006</b>
DON'T KNOW	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
TOTAL: ( N = )	100% (930)	100% (1008)	100% (947)	100% (903)	100% (1000)	100% (934)	100% (466)	100% (1035)		

**GROUP 2 ("TRANSITIONAL SOCIETIES")**

	ARMEN	AZERB	BELAR	BOSN	BULG	CROAT	GEORG	MACED	MOLDO	ROMAN	RUSS	SERB	UKR	GROUP 2 MEAN
<b>LITTLE (1-4)</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>28.0</b>
MEDIUM (5-6)	31	21	31	33	32	29	31	26	28	30	32	35	28	
<b>PLENTRY (7-10)</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>39.0</b>
DON'T KNOW	4	5	5	1	-	-	4	9	3	-	-	-	12	
TOTAL: ( N = )	100% (2000)	100% (2002)	100% (2092)	100% (1200)	100% (1034)	100% (1196)	100% (2593)	100% (995)	100% (984)	100% (1103)	100% (1961)	100% (1280)	100% (2811)	

**Table 3. Preference of EQUALITY VS. INCENTIVES in post-communist societies.**  
**Selected results from 1990 World Values Survey**

QUESTION 125. HOW WOULD YOU PLACE YOUR VIEWS ON THIS SCALE? 1 – MEANS YOU AGREE COMPLETELY WITH STATEMENT ON THE LEFT; 10 – WITH STATEMENT ON THE RIGHT; IF YOUR VIEWS FALL IN BETWEEN, CHOOSE A NUMBER IN BETWEEN:  
 INCOMES SHOULD BE MADE MORE EQUAL // WE NEED LARGER INCOME DIFFERENCES AS INCENTIVES FOR INDIVIDUAL EFFORT

**GROUP 1 ("CONSOLIDATED DEMOCRACIES")**

	CZECH REP.	ESTONIA	HUNGARY	LATVIA	LITHUANIA	POLAND	SLOVAKIA	SLOVENIA	GROUP 1 MEAN	T-TEST SIGNIFICANCE FOR EQUALITY OF GROUP 1 AND 2 MEANS
<b>EQUALITY (1-4)</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>.093</b>
IN BETWEEN (5-6)	8	13	18	18	12	8	16	18		
<b>INCENTIVES (7-10)</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>67.8</b>	<b>.002</b>
DON'T KNOW	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
TOTAL: ( N = )	100% (930)	100% (1008)	100% (947)	100% (903)	100% (1000)	100% (934)	100% (466)	100% (1035)		

**GROUP 2 ("TRANSITIONAL SOCIETIES")**

	ARMEN	AZERB	BELAR	BOSN	BULG	CROAT	GEORG	MACED	MOLDO	ROMAN	RUSS	SERB	UKR	GROUP 2 MEAN
<b>EQUALITY (1-4)</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>26.6</b>
IN BETWEEN (5-6)	22	25	25	27	18	24	15	21	18	19	23	18	23	
<b>INCENT. (7-10)</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>47.8</b>
DON'T KNOW	5	10	6	-	-	-	3	6	3	-	-	2	9	
TOTAL: ( N = )	100% (2000)	100% (2002)	100% (2092)	100% (1200)	100% (1034)	100% (1196)	100% (2593)	100% (995)	100% (984)	100% (1103)	100% (1961)	100% (1280)	100% (2811)	



**Table 4. Comparison of independent variables' means  
for “consolidated democracies” and “transitional societies”**

Independent variables		Freedom House democracy ranking	Freedom House economic reform ranking	Freedom House consolidated transition ranking	World Bank transition index
<b>Original values</b>	“no free choice” perception	.103 (.565)***	.089(.530)***	.192(.557)***	-.142(-.809)***
	Desire of more incentives	-.045 (-.120) **	-.043(-.49)**	-.088(-.496)***	-
	Adjusted R-square	.686	.652	.695	.635
<b>Logarithmically transformed values</b>	“no freedom of choice” perception	6.368 (.622)***	5.565(.593)***	11.93(.618)***	-7.93(-.806)***
	Desire of more incentives	-5.337(-.457)***	-5.008(-.468)**	-10.34(-.469)***	-
	Adjusted R-square	.730	.698	.742	.630

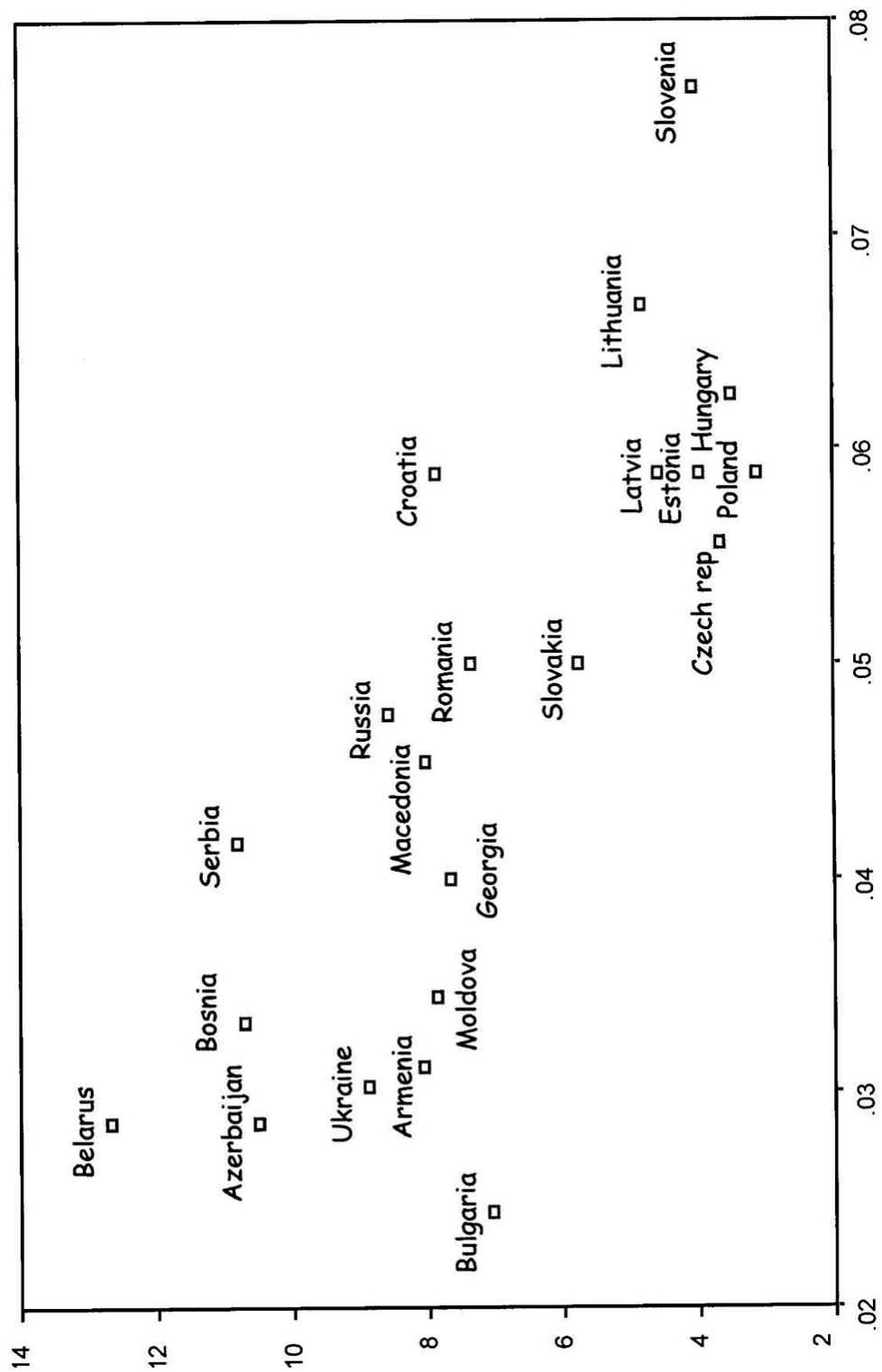


Fig. 1. Freedom House consolidated ranking (“democracy” score + “economic reform” score; Y) plotted against “lack of free choice” response frequencies (inversed values; X)

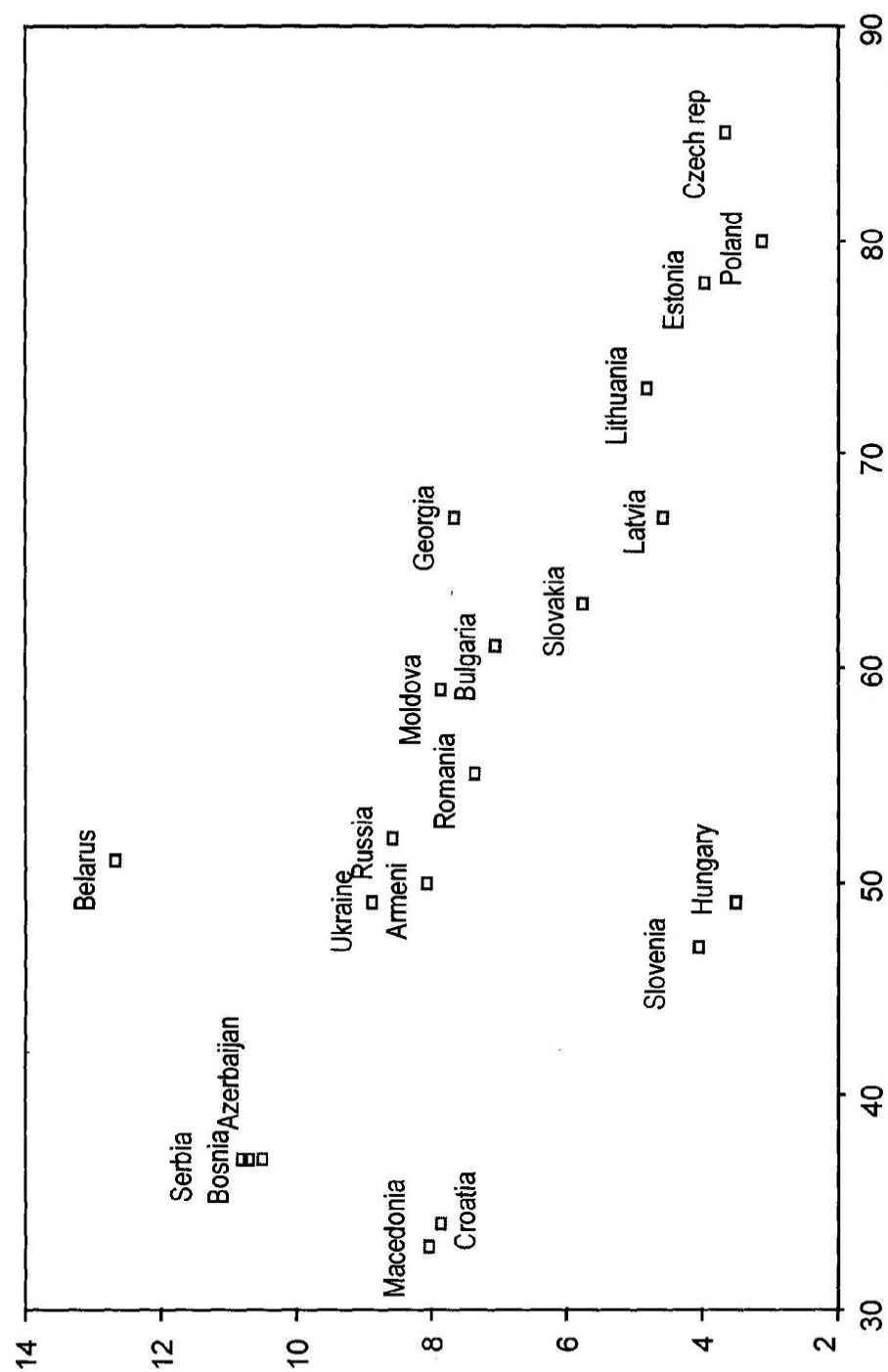


Fig. 2. Freedom House consolidated ranking (“democracy” score + “economic reform” score; Y) plotted against “approval of income incentives” response frequencies (X)

## APPENDIX 2. A Timeline of Ukraine's Political History, 1990 – 2012.

March 1990	First democratic elections to the Supreme Rada and local legislatures.
July 1990.	Supreme Rada adopts the Declaration of Sovereignty.
August 24, 1991	Supreme Rada adopts the Independence Declaration Act.
December 1, 1991	Independence Declaration Act is approved by popular referendum. Leonid Kravchuk is elected as the President of Ukraine.
October 1992	Leonid Kuchma is appointed as the Prime Minister of Ukraine.
September 1993	Leonid Kuchma resigns from the prime Minister position.
March 1994	Elections to the Supreme Rada and local councils
July 1994	Leonid Kuchma wins presidential elections.
July 1995	After a stand-off with the President, the Supreme Rada adopts “Constitutional Treaty” as a provisional constitution of the state.
June 1996.	Supreme Rada adopts the new Constitution of Ukraine that strengthens the powers of the President.
March 1998	Elections to the Supreme Rada and local councils
October 1999	Presidential elections. Leonid Kuchma wins his second term.
November 2000	“Tapegate” scandal in the Supreme Rada implicating Leonid Kuchma in ordering the assassination of the journalist Georgiy Gongadze and other crimes.
December 2000 – March 2001	Civil protests on Kiev streets demanding Kuchma's resignation.
March 2002	Elections to the Supreme Rada and local councils
October – December 2004	Presidential elections followed by mass protests against fraud turning into the “Orange Revolution.”

January 2005	Victor Yushchenko is inaugurated as the new President.
September 2005	Public scandal inside the Yushchenko team results in the resignation of the cabinet headed by Yulia Tymoshenko. Orange coalition split.
March 2006.	Elections to the Supreme Rada and local councils
July 2006	After lengthy negotiations, Viktor Yanukovich is appointed as the Prime Minister of Ukraine
April 2007	President Yushchenko disbands the Supreme Rada and calls early elections
September 2007	Early elections to the Supreme Rada.
November 2007	Yulia Tymoshenko is appointed as the Prime Minister.
January – February 2010	Presidential elections won by Victor Yanukovich.
March 2010	Yulia Tymoshenko Cabinet is forced to resign by the vote of no confidence in the rada.
June 2011	Yulia Tymoshenko is put on trial on accusation of economic loss inflicted while she served as the Prime Minister and then sentenced to 7-year imprisonment.
October 2012	Elections to the Supreme Rada

### **APPENDIX 3.**

#### **TEN MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES IN POST-SOVIET UKRAINE (BACKGROUND INFORMATION)**

##### **Rukh (“People’s Movement of Ukraine”).**

Was founded in 1989 as a civic political movement before alternative political parties were allowed in the Soviet Union. The organization takes its roots in Ukrainian dissidents, most notable of them — Vyacheslav Chornovil. Eventually was converted into a political party of “national-democratic” orientation. Rukh had sizable registered membership in Western provinces. In 1991, Chornovil won 23% of the national vote in presidential elections. In the course of the 1990s, the party gradually lost some of its influence and was finally ruined by consecutive splits in 1998 and 1999. Chornovil was killed presumably in a road accident, under suspicious circumstances, in 1999, months before presidential elections. Rukh’s ideas and key activists later served in Viktor Yushchenko’s campaign of 2004 and in his party “Our Ukraine.”

##### **Socialist Party.**

Was founded in October 1991 by members of the banned Communist Party. Its leader Oleksandr Moroz was the speaker of the Supreme Rada from 1994 to 1999 and competed with Leonid Kuchma for presidency. The party generally stood on the positions of national communism, in contrast to the re-established Communist Party which more consistently oriented towards “Soviet” legacies. The party had a sizable (15-30 members) faction in the Rada in every election until 2007 when it failed to pass through the electoral threshold.

##### **Communist Party.**

Claims to be the successor of the Communist Party of Ukraine from Soviet times, although it was discontinued from 1991 to 1993. The party won 24% of the vote in the parliamentary elections of 1998, 20% in 2002, 3.6% in 2006, and 11% in 2012.

##### **People’s Democratic Party.**

Was founded in 1996 by a merge of several small parties of liberal and “centrist” orientation. Quickly rose in prominence as a “party of power” project. Later split into pro-Kuchma and anti-Kuchma groups, with the latter forming their own party, “Reforms and Order.”

**Social Democratic Party (United).**

Was founded in 1991, became conspicuous after it was headed by Viktor Medvedchuk, who later became President Kuchma's Chief of Staff. Was represented in the parliament in 1998 with 4% of the vote and in 2002 with 6.5%.

**Reforms and Order.**

Was registered in 1997 as a party of liberal orientation. In 2002, became the backbone of Viktor Yushchenko's bloc "Our Ukraine" in the Supreme Rada. In 2006 formed a bloc with Yulia Tymoshenko's party "Motherland."

**"Motherland".**

Was founded in 1999 as Yulia Tymoshenko's personalistic party. Later modified names to Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko, and then "United Opposition – Motherland." Gained 7% in the parliamentary elections in 2002, 22% in 2006, 30% in 2007, and 25% in 2012. Its ideological orientation is amorphous; is generally considered to be an example of a "catch-all" populist party.

**Party of Regions.**

Was founded as the Party of Regional Revival – a project initiated by several municipal government leaders. Later merged with several other organizations and turned into the political holding of the Donbass economic clan. Was headed by Viktor Yanukovich since 2003. Is the richest and the most powerful political party in Ukraine, claims to have 1.5 million registered members – although it resorts to "crowds for hire" when holding mass rallies.

**Our Ukraine.**

Initially this was the title of Viktor Yushchenko's inter-party bloc in the Supreme Rada. In 2005, after Yushchenko's victory in the presidential elections, the party was established by government bureaucrats as his personalistic party. The party's influence deteriorated as Yushchenko lost popular support. It earned 1.1% of the vote in the elections of 2012.

#### **APPENDIX 4.**

##### **Contestation and successful framing: presidential elections in Ukraine.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Winner</b>	<b>Winning proposition</b>
1991	Leonid Kravchuk	Independent statehood, well-being, spiritual revival
1994	Leonid Kuchma	To end economic crisis and make a more balanced language policy
1999	Leonid Kuchma	To prevent “communist comeback”
2004	Viktor Yushchenko	Honest and open governance, “gagsters go to prison.”
2010	Viktor Yanukovych	Revenge for the loss of 2004.



# **APPENDIX 5. Election outcomes and factional cleavages in the Supreme Rada.**

<b>1990</b>	Communists – 239 “People’s Rada” – 125 Non-affiliated – 78
<b>1994</b>	Communists – 89 Socialists and Rural Party – 33 Rukh – 20 Other “national-democratic” or nationalist – 35 “centrist” – 9 Non-affiliated – 168
<b>1998</b>	Communists – 121 Socialists and Rural Party – 34 Rukh – 46 Greens – 19 People’s Democratic Party – 28 Hromada and other “centrist” – 53 Non-affiliated – 111
<b>2002</b>	Our Ukraine bloc (Yushchenko) – 111 Yulia Tymoshenko bloc – 22 Communists – 66 Socialists – 24 For United Ukraine (party of power bloc) – 101 Non-affiliated – 92
<b>2006</b>	Party of Regions – 186 Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc – 129 Our Ukraine - 81 Socialists – 33 Communists – 21
<b>2007</b>	Party of Regions – 211 Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc – 116 Our Ukraine - 76 Communists – 25 People’s Party – 22
<b>2012</b>	Party of Regions – 187 Motherland – 102 Klitschko’s “Democratic Alliance” – 40 Svoboda (“Freedom”) – 38 Communists – 32 Others/non-affiliated – 51

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